THE NATION

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LETTERS

The Wrong Hands

Dear Sirs: I was very much impressed with Jesse D. Wolff's article, "The Same Old Germans," in your March 12 issue [see also: "Neo-Nazism on the March," by Heinz Pol, April 9]. I happened to be a member of the first UNRRA team which entered Germany on May 8, 1945 —V.E.Day. During my almost two years' stay there, I had occasion to be in contact with Germans of every walk of life. From college professor to farmer and cab driver, they steadfastly denied knowledge of what was going on in Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen, etc., or of the existence of forced labor, even though most of them partook of the worldly goods of the victims and themselves employed forced labor. . . . To believe them, there was not a Nazi in all Germany. . . .

The paranoiac delusion of superiority was as plain in defeat as it had been in victory. I remember a visit to Mayor Schacht of Baden-Baden, where Frau Schacht whispered to me, in explanation of the rich table setting and fairly elegant attire of herself and the Mayor: "If you wonder at this, please note that these things we have had for years. We Germans know how to take care of our things, not like the French." The French representative sat right beside me, the victorious much more poorly dressed than the conquered. . . .

We have put our faith in the wrong hands.

SOPHIA SCHUPACK

Santa Barbara, Calif.

Unfair to Whites

Dear Sirs: As a true Christian, I must express my deep concern at the way the Negroes are humiliating the whites in the South. By deliberately refusing to retaliate when physically assaulted by a white, the Negro is deceptively posing as a man unable to defend himself. The white, taught as a Christian never to strike a defenseless human being, suffers a deep sense of guilt when his physical assaults on a Negro are not resisted. After all, the Negro suffers mere *physical* pain. But as Christians we know that it is not man's physical nature but his *spiritual* nature which is sacred: and it is precisely the white's spiritual nature which is being maimed by materialistically minded Negroes concerned only with obtaining a good education which will enable them to enter college, compete for responsible jobs, earn decent salaries, dwell in comfortable homes, compete with white families for respect and status, and rear their children in clean and healthy surroundings.

GENE GRUNDT

San Francisco, Calif.

Wings Don't Make Angels

Dear Sirs: May I comment on "The Air Force Credo," an editorial in your issue of March 5, 1960? Your immediate concern was with "the scurrilous drivel in the A.F. Guide for Security Indoctrination," and from there you went on to indict the political orientation of the entire service.

With all due respect for the sincerity of your concern, I would like to introduce some relevant considerations:

(1) You quote the analysis of John Norris of the Washington *Post*, purporting to explain why Air Force personnel "tend to see God and country in their own image. . . ." To whatever extent this may be true, it is true as well—as any sociologist will tell you—of the personnel of *any* large-scale organization and is noted by some sociologists under the rubric of "occupational psychosis" or "professional deformation."

(2) As to the degree of "political sophistication" of USAF personnel, personally, I find no exceptional difference between them and the overwhelming majority of our citizenry. The failing is common to our entire society.

(3) Finally, one thing most of us learn in our dealings with others is that if we keep treating a man as an s.o.b., sooner or later we get him to act like one. In your concern with what you conceive of as the shortcomings of certain groups, this should, I believe, be borne in mind.

Needless to say, these are the views of an individual member of the USAF, also concerned with distortion and prejudice in all its forms.

CHARLES KONIGSBERG
Captain, USAF

Princeton, N.J.

What's in a Name?

Dear Sirs: Elections since 1920 show that the only way Nixon can be sure to win in 1960 is if his Democratic opponent has a shorter name. The record: Harding beat Cox, Coolidge beat Davis and Hoover beat Smith; then the Democrats got wise and successfully picked Franklin Delano Roosevelt to beat Hoover, Landon, Willkie and Dewey, and equally successfully won with Truman against Dewey; and finally the GOP won with Eisenhower (ten letters) against Stevenson (nine).

There's no doubt: the Republicans would be safer this year with Rockefeller.

ELIOT BIERS

New York City

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 1960
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THE NATION

EDITORIALS

The Strongest Tickets

All the palaver about polls and primaries is diverting public attention from a point of cardinal importance in the pre-convention phase of this year's election. The point is this: the national interest would best be served if both parties were to nominate the strongest ticket each can name. To the extent that either party fails to do so, for whatever reason, the greater will be the likelihood that the campaign will be fought on minor, divisive or extraneous issues. Fortunately, it is within the power of both parties to name tickets that would be so evenly matched that the nominees could do nothing but stand there, toe-to-toe, and fight it out — squarely, fiercely, directly — on the main issues.

These ideal tickets are easy to name. Everyone agrees that Nixon and Rockefeller, in either order, would be the strongest ticket the Republicans could field. It is almost as widely conceded — by everyone, that is, except the candidates — that the strongest Democratic ticket would be Stevenson and Kennedy in that order. Rockefeller and Kennedy are, so to speak, political twins: rich, attractive, knowledgeable, charismatic; both are excellent campaigners and fine public servants. For the Vice Presidency, Senator Kennedy would be an ideal nominee; that he would not be the Democrats' strongest Presidential nominee is most convincingly attested, perhaps, by the consistent, highly suspicious efforts of Vice President Nixon to give him a leg-up for the nomination. In 1952 and 1956, Stevenson faced insurmountable difficulties not merely in the fact that his opponent was General Eisenhower, but also in the temper of the times and the unavoidable inheritance of the Truman-Acheson cold-war policies and their consequences. But in 1960, and against Nixon, all of Stevenson's finest qualities would shine to advantage; his special strength, for example, is with independent voters, few of whom admire the Vice President.

In the key states — California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New York — Stevenson and Kennedy versus Nixon and Rockefeller would be a battle royal between evenly matched antagonists. Apart from individual ambitions and petty vested interests, all that delays widespread recognition of the strength of these tickets is the popular assumption that neither Kennedy nor Rockefeller could ever be induced to accept nomination for the Vice Presidency. But there is really little basis for this assumption. Both are honorable men, devoted to the public interest, with a keen sense of their political and personal responsibilities. The Vice Presidency, after all, is the second highest elective honor within the power of the American people to bestow; it is not to be declined lightly or out of personal preference or pique — particularly by men who can well afford to serve the public interest. Let both parties name their strongest tickets and this year's campaign could turn out to be a dramatic and meaningful debate on the major issues.

A Small Step Forward

By a vote of 71 to 18, the Senate has passed a civil-rights bill, accepting with minor modifications the measure previously enacted by the House. The plan provides for the appointment by the federal courts of voting referees empowered to register Negro citizens eligible to vote in federal and state elections. Unfortunately, the provisions constitute a legal labyrinth beset with booby traps. The referees may be appointed only after a full-fledged judicial proceeding in which the court has found a "pattern or practice" of discrimination. After the court has so found, Negroes must first attempt to register with state authorities before they can register with the referee. Then the referee's finding may be challenged in the court by local election officials. These legal intricacies will be fully exploited by the Southern states. And there will be changes in Southern election laws, such as increasing the number of election districts, to evade the impact of the bill. Of itself, the referee plan is not likely to result in any significant increase in the number of Negro voters, and the other features of the bill are relatively unimportant.

Yet enactment of the bill is not without hopeful aspects. For one thing, it has given a new dimension to the struggle for civil rights, which for too long has been treated solely as a matter for the courts. The original proposal of the Civil Rights Commission for the Presidential appointment of federal registrars drew public attention to the basic fact that the federal Executive, rather than the judiciary alone, must accept a responsibility and play a role. Other approaches have likewise

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been opened up as political possibilities, such as the proposal to invoke Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment, which requires a decrease of representation in Congress to the extent than any state denies or abridges the right to vote on grounds other than age, residence or the commission of a crime. The need for reapportionment of Congressional seats following the current census makes the consideration of this device most opportune. Another possibility is the adoption of a Constitutional amendment which would simplify the registration process, and make it amenable to federal control, by limiting qualifications for voters to age and residence. A third is a fundamental attack upon the underlying problem of intimidation and economic coercion of Negro citizens, possibly through the application of economic sanctions. If the supporters of civil rights can develop and agree upon a practicable program along one or more of these lines, it may raise the struggle to a new and more hopeful level.

Slander

Frank Sinatra bought half a page in *The New York Times* and other major dailies last week to state:

> In view of the reaction of my family, my friends and the American public, I have instructed my attorneys to make a settlement with Albert Maltz and to inform him that he will not write the screenplay for *The Execution of Private Slovik*.

Mr. Sinatra's family and friends will have to decide for themselves how they will react to being associated with his pusillanimous retreat from principle, but on behalf of the American public we charge slander. A news story from the West Coast, carried earlier in the *Times*, states that the loudest voices of objection to Mr. Maltz's employment came from the Hearst press and the American Legion. The confusion of such yaps with the voice of America is clear defamation of the national character.

The Democrats Think It Over

Senator Henry M. Jackson, the perennial viewer-with-alarm from Washington, "rapped" President Eisenhower's efforts to beef up America's military might as "little and late." Senator Jackson's confrere in drumming up trade for the aerospace industry, Senator Stuart Symington, has preached the same gospel from one end of the country to the other. But there are indications that the message is not getting over. Some Democrats, at least, are not keen to be known as the party of the ever-expanding armament economy. The Democratic Advisory Committee actually dares to talk about peace. It has just appointed a committee of seven scientists and economists to plan for the transition from a defense economy to one based on peaceful endeavor, in the event of world disarmament actually coming to pass. Those who regard disarmament as a Communist plot will find little comfort in the names of the committee members. The co-chairmen are Polykarp Kusch of Columbia, winner of the Nobel prize in physics in 1955, and Seymour E. Harris, Littauer Professor of Political Economy at Harvard. Serving with them are H. Bentley Glass, Richard A. Lester, Isador Lubin, F. T. McClure and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The co-chairmen issued a statement which, even a year ago, would have startled devout believers in the doctrine of strength through armament profits:

> We believe that peace is attainable. It is necessary that we prepare now for a planned transition to a peaceful economy, when that transition is justified by meaningful and enforceable world disarmament. . . . Our Committee's first effort will be to recommend an orderly and, we hope, painless shifting of directions of expenditures of many billions of dollars annually from defense and defense production to production for use and to the building of an economic and social plant geared to the purposes and opportunities of peace.

The statement rings with sense and sincerity. On the part of the Democratic Advisory Committee it may be only a hedge, but the fact that a hedge is deemed necessary is highly significant. The drums of Jackson and Symington are not yet muffled, the banners of Acheson and Truman not yet furled, but when Adlai Stevenson said on April 11 that the major issues, in order of priority, are "first, peace; second, disarmament, and third, the allocation of resources," he was evidently not talking for himself alone.

Arming the Unarmed

Armaments are not static. Either there must be disarmament, or armaments must continually expand. For if the great remain armed, the small must be armed also, and this process of arming the unarmed involves increasing trouble and peril for all [see "Small Arms Race," by Stanley Meisler, *The Nation*, April 16]. There are several facets to this problem. First, there are the unindustrialized nations which, in their backwardness, lack modern means of defending themselves and attacking their neighbors. The rising new nations of Africa constitute one such headache for the great powers; the Western Big Three foreign ministers have been trying to work out an arms-to-Africa rationing scheme which could be passed on to the Summit Conference. Nobody wants an African arms race, but the Africans are not going to be content with spears as the great powers proliferate their megaton bombs and world-girdling missiles. Then there is the situation in our own hemisphere. Half-starvation is rife in Latin America, and one reason is the military regimes which are the *de facto* rulers and which thrive on American

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"aid." In the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic and Cuba eye each other across a few miles of water, and the United States piously refuses Castro helicopters while spending $46 billion annually for its own "defense." Across the world lies China, already a great power, though one substantially non-existent to American diplomacy. Recognized or not, China will get nuclear weapons, and what pleasant vistas spring into view at that prospect! The longer the greater powers wait, the faster their difficulties multiply. Their only hope is to agree among themselves and set an example to the others.

Wanted: an Atlas

A busy, preoccupied Congress, eager for adjournment in an election year, is in danger once again of having its collective leg pulled by another "captive nations" resolution. In S. Con. Res. 95, now pending before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Paul Douglas would have Congress reaffirm "its intention to stand firmly by the peoples of the captive nations," much in the spirit of the original Captive Nations Resolution now embalmed, as an historical curiosity, in P. L. 86-90. But before Congress takes action on the latest Douglas proposal, it might be well if the experts on the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee were to consult an atlas. For among the "captive nations" referred to — as in P. L. 86-90 — are Cossackia, Idel-Ural and White Ruthenia. Dr. Gregory P. Tschebotarioff, a member of the engineering faculty of Princeton University for the last twenty-three years, has pronounced "Cossackia" a pure hoax and urges that the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee afford him an opportunity so to testify under oath.

In 1918-19, Tschebotarioff served as personal interpreter to the elected *Ataman* of the "Grand Army of the Don," the name officially adopted by the largest of all Cossack regions when it refused to recognize Bolshevik rule and proclaimed its temporary independence until the re-establishment of a "lawful" government in Moscow. It was not called "Cossackia," nor were any other Cossack regions so designated. And the point, in any case, is that the formation of the "Grand Army of the Don" was not an act of separation from Russia. On the contrary, early in 1919 its troops were placed under the supreme command of General Denikin, leader of the Volunteer (White) Army, whose slogan was "One and Undivided Russia." No more has "Idel-Ural" ever existed as a bona fide state. Back in 1918, a small separatist group in the city of Kazan issued a proclamation which referred to "Idel-Ural." The mass of the population in the Urals is Russian, with a small admixture of descendants from several original Mongolian tribes. "Idel-Ural" is a fiction resurrected by Nazi propaganda. As for "White Ruthenia," it is the creation of a proclamation issued in 1918 by German puppets in German-occupied Minsk; the term has also been used by some Germans and Hungarians of the region to emphasize the fact that they are not Byelo-Russians or any other variety of Russians.

Before Congress sets out on another rhetorical crusade to restore — in the words of Senator Douglas' resolution — "God-given rights to the people of the captive nations," it might first take time out to verify the historical and juridical existence of at least three of the "captive nations." It would be most embarrassing if rhetoric were to pass into action and — by some miracle — the Soviet regime were to fall, leaving the crusaders in the position of having to identify "liberated" Cossackia, White Ruthenia and Idel-Ural.

Crime and Punishment

Representative F. Edward Hebert, as Chairman of a subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, has publicized the names of the bestarred peddlers of munitions contracts and the corporations to which they owe allegiance. Not content with this brutality, the Congressman embarked on measures to discourage the thriving practice. He found, or thought he had found, an ally in the redoubtable Carl Vinson, Chairman of the Armed Services Committee and, in a sense, Representative Hebert's boss. Hebert proposed to make the retired-officer-turned-salesman guilty of a crime, punishable by a $10,000 fine and one year in prison. At first Mr. Vinson was "sizzling" in support of the proposal; then suddenly — in Hebert's words — the plan was "gutted": the ex-officer was merely to lose his retirement pay for the period of his salesmanship, after which he would be restored to Uncle Sam's payroll until his next offense. At this blow, the cruel Hebert bawled so loudly that the benign Vinson engaged another member of the committee, Kilday of Texas, to restore some teeth into the bill. Kilday proposed that an officer who engages in any peddling within two years after retirement should lose his retirement pay for two years and be subject to court-martial. In Hebert's estimation, these teeth were only "baby teeth"; he redoubled his efforts, arguing that the contractor who hires an officer to use his influence is as guilty as the man hired, and should be fined, jailed or both. A court-martial, he snorted, would be just an "old class reunion."

Mr. Vinson has been in Congress forty-six years and the House hesitates to cross him. So Hebert was voted down — although not by much, according to those who heard the voice vote. But it cannot be said that his efforts were of no avail. For the contractors and their distinguished servitors, Hebert's excoriation was painful. They may not go to jail, but one may surmise that henceforth they will be a mite more careful.

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SPRING BOOKS

Dark Laughter in the Towers

Terry Southern

THERE'S no doubt about it, the rarest Laughter is brewed in high places; it courses down the walls of civilization, stone by stone, brow by brow, slowing always, thinning, at last, to a trickle. *"I don't get it!"* shouts fierce Mister Dumbell and the howl is taken up by the querulous, those who know better, and *voila* . . . that faculty's development is boxed into another twenty-year septic tank. And yet the day God and Democracy folded in America, there was bound to be almost nothing left but Laughter. Laughter and Sex.

Laughter has always been a big thing, of course, but refinement of faculties, like any growth in the jungle, requires sustenance, and each flourishes at the expense of another—the overshadowed become stunted and die, or else must mutate into a new species. Now, of the four great emotions that grew in our garden—God, Democracy, Sex and Laughter—it seems that two are already dead, the third is mutating in a curious way, and Laughter, the exotic perennial, appears to be in the bloom of a strange and startling second growth.

Nowhere is art forced to breed with such religious urgency and abandon as on the floor of a moral shambles; overnight new forms spring up, to appear like wildflowers in the splintered marble of a demolished drugstore. We find ourselves now standing on the threshold of a strong existentialist literature.

Just as formal Existentialism is a quasi-science of methodology—not concerned with asserting a standard of values but with determining the nature of the standards that actually prevail—so, a mature existentialist literature is one in which no standard of aesthetics (or communication) is presumed to obtain *prior* to the created work, but which may, possibly, be derived *from* it. What this involves primarily is the gradual discarding of the purely literary orientation from which most traditional literature is conceived and read, and the taking instead of life and imagination as the frame of reference. An example of this is Meursault's indifferent behavior (in *The Stranger*) at his mother's funeral. To an appreciation which derives mainly from a professed ethic, such as "Christianity," or from a literary orientation (i.e., comparing Meursault's behavior with that of other protagonists in the same circumstances) his behavior would appear to be "a mark against him," whereas, in fact, the actual effect achieved is quite the opposite. This author-reader responsibility, in character delineation, of sometimes deliberately reversing stock values that are suspected of being dead, would seem to be a vital one, because only through such experimentation (on the part of the author) and such openness (on the part of the reader) can the real, existing, values be separated from those which are merely hypothetical.

In primitive existentialist fiction (i.e., pre-French) there are elements of humor which, though cherished by certain intrepids, have heretofore resisted that kind of formalized understanding the academies traffic in. Prior to the general acceptance of the literary concept of *"the absurd,"* the work of Kafka, for example, was unclassifiable; it stood apart, freakish and isolated, outside the historical scheme. It contained elements irreconcilable with even its most oversimplified definitions, e.g., "an allegory about anti-Semitism." Why then make K. out to be such an incorrigible donkey? *Why* were he and Frieda rolling around in that spilt beer on the floor of the Herrenhof? *Why the relentless dead-pan burlesque*? We are not laughing *with* K., nor *with* Kafka; if there is any laugh, it is *at* them. Now this is a deliberate form of humor, inexplicable except in terms of *the absurd,* or in another area of its development, *the grotesque.*

Let us consider briefly, in this later light, the sequence and tone of events in a well-known novel of 1929, Faulkner's own twenty-one-gun salute to the absurd, *As I Lay Dying*:

Addie Bundren, farm wife and mother, lies ill in bed, presumably dying. Outside the open window, her eldest son, Cash, is noisily constructing a coffin; from time to time Mrs. Bundren leans forward to see how the work is progressing. Beyond the bedroom screen-door, sitting on the porch, old Anse Bundren, her husband, discusses with two of their other sons (Jewel and Darl) the feasibility of setting out now to pick up a wagon load of wood, a day's drive away, in order to earn $3; they are undecided because Mrs. Bundren may die before they get back. The discussion is interrupted by the sudden arrival of Vardaman, the youngest son (six years old), staggering under the weight of a huge fish he has just caught —a nameless species of fish, so curiously obese that it must be likened to a hog.

It is decided that Jewel and Darl will risk going for the wood after all, and they depart in the two-mule-team wagon. The doctor arrives, but because of his girth, advanced age and the steepness of the terrain, he has to be hauled up to the house on a rope. Like a hog? In any case, his thoughts reveal his awareness of the situation's classic absurdity, even beyond despair:

> *"I'll be damned if I can see why I don't quit. A man seventy years old, weighing two hundred and odd pounds, being hauled up and down a damn mountain on a rope."*

Mrs. Bundren, after refusing to see the doctor, dies while he is still there, out on the porch. Vardaman, under the impression that the doctor is responsible for her death, rushes about wildly, shouting: "The fat son of a bitch!" He then finds a stick and drives off the doctor's horse and buggy.

Having put Mrs. Bundren in the coffin, Cash bores holes in the lid; twice the auger slips through the lid and goes into her head. When the neighbors come to pay their last respects there is a good deal of terse formality atttached to the event, as well as to the author's description of Mrs. Bundren's burial dress:

> It was her wedding dress and it had a flare-out bottom, and they had laid her head to foot in it [the coffin] so the dress could spread out, and they had made her a veil out of a mosquito bar so the auger holes in her face wouldn't show.

Meanwhile Jewel and Darl have run the wagon into a ditch, broken a wheel and are three days getting back to the house. When the coffin is finally loaded onto the wagon, all get aboard — Anse, Cash, Darl, Vardaman and the daughter, Dewey Dell. Jewel rides along-

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TERRY SOUTHERN is the author of The Magic Christian *(Random House) and* Flash and Filigree *(Coward-McCann).*

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side the wagon on one of the spotted horses he bought from Snopes; this is a cause for angry embarrassment for Anse — he, who is generally a primary source of the absurd, is for once aware of being caught in it:

> I told him not to bring that horse out of respect for his dead ma . . . prancing along on a durn circus animal.

It is against this backdrop, like a Hieronymus Bosch soap-opera, that they start out for the Jefferson cemetery — a pilgrimage which, for sheer visual slapstick within a framework of straightforwardness, probably has no equal. As in Malaparte's account of the first incendiary raids on Hamburg, it is almost a parody of the absurd — a parody, however, which never cracks.

FROM THE very outset this modest caravan, on a mission of piety, is followed by buzzards, circling lower and in increasing number as the journey progresses. The bridge used to get to Jefferson is impassable because of the high waters, so they attempt to ford the river. What happens here, of course, is that the entire rig — wagon, cargo, team and all — is swept crabwise down the river, and overturned, drowning the mules and breaking Cash's leg. Despite his broken leg, Cash manages to save Jewel's spotted pony which had been knocked over during the melee and was floundering in a near-drowning panic; as he leads him out of the water, the horse kicks him in the stomach and he is unconscious for about an hour.

Naturally the coffin has thrown its moorings during the capsize and now runs free with the current, so that a downstream Mack Sennett chase is necessary to retrieve it. This is followed by an insane underwater search for Cash's hammer and saw and other small tools which were in the wagon and are now at the bottom of the raging stream.

Having lost the mules, they must get a new team, from, by a bit of ironic bad luck, Snopes — so that Anse is forced to trade his cultivator, seeder and, unbeknown to Jewel, the spotted horse. By now it is dark and they must wait until the following day before resuming the journey.

Not being able to use the bridge means that they will have to take a much more circuitous route to Jefferson. Mrs. Bundren has now been dead for five days and the buzzards become more menacing. Cash's broken leg begins to bother him, and they stop again, long enough to purchase ten cents worth of cement and pour raw concrete on the leg — shortly after which his foot turns black and he gradually sinks into a delirium. By now the stench of the coffin has become intolerable:

> Three negroes walk beside the road ahead of us; when we pass them their heads suddenly turn with that expression of shock and instinctive outrage. "Great God," one says, "what they got in that wagon?"

It is so bad, in fact that they are not allowed to stop in town, people everywhere covering their faces with handkerchiefs at the wagon's approach. Jewel, meanwhile, enraged half out of his mind over the unauthorized sale of his pony, sits in a semi-catatonic state, scarcely speaking for the rest of the trip. The girl, Dewey Dell, believes she is pregnant, and at first opportunity goes into a drugstore trying to buy an abortive drug; the pharmacist says he will give it to her if she goes to bed with him; she does and he gives her some capsules filled with talcum powder. At their next stop the buzzards become

Heine Dying in Paris

(Adapted from the German of Heinrich Heine)

I

Morphine

Yes, in the end they are much of a pair,
my twin gladiator beauties—thinner than a hair,
their bronze bell-heads embrace the void; one's more austere,
however and much the whiter; none dares cry down his character.
How confidingly the corrupt one rocked me in his arms;
his poppy garland, nearing, hushed my mind's alarms
at sword-point for a moment.
Soon a pin-point of infinite regression! And now that incident
is closed. There's no way out,
unless the other turn about
and, pale, distinguished, perfect, drop his torch.
He and I stand alerted for life's doric, drilled, withdrawing march:
sleep is lovely, death is better still,
not to have been born is of course the miracle.

II

Every idle desire has died in my breast;
even hatred of evil things, even my feeling
for my own and other men's distress —
what lives in me is death.
The curtain falls, the play is over;
my dear German public is goosestepping home, yawning.
They are no fools, those good people:
they are slurping their dinners quite happily,
bear-hugging beer-mugs — laughing and singing.

That fellow in Homer's book was quite right:
he said: the meanest little Philistine living
in Stukkert am Neckar is luckier
than I, Achilles Pelides, the dead lion,
glorious, shadow-king of the underworld.

III

My zenith was luckily happier than my night:
whenever I touched the lyre of inspiration, I smote
the Chosen People. Often — all sex and thunder —
I tupped those overblown and summer clouds . . .
But the summer has flowered. My sword is scabbarded
in the marrow of my spinal discs.
Soon I must lose all these half-gods
that made my world so agonizingly half-joyful.

The hand clangs to a close on the dominant;
the champagne glass of orange sherbet breaks
on my lips — all glass; straws in the wind?
Mortal, I witness earth's abstruse acumen,
her sugared leasehold on life:
mid-summer's frail and green-juice bird's-nest.

ROBERT LOWELL

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so bold that they are walking around on the ground like turkeys and perching on the coffin itself when possible; Vardaman drives them about with a stick. That night they take refuge in a barn; in the night, Darl, the quiet one, sets fire to it; they have quite a bit of trouble to get the coffin out intact.

In order to avoid a law suit by the owner of the barn, Anse decides Darl should be committed at once to an insane asylum; they subdue him and turn him over to the authorities, at which point he does, of course, go raving mad.

On the eleventh day after her death, they succeed in getting Mrs. Bundren buried as planned—an anticlimax which is immediately redeemed in a Chaplinesque manner by Anse's taking a new wife the same day, before starting the long trip back to the house.

FOR SOME YEARS now in America there has existed a popular genre of situation comedy (as typified by Jack Benny) in which the comedian acts as his own straight man; he approaches situations in good faith and he attempts to maintain a certain amount of dignity and reasonableness under the adverse conditions which invariably arise. The humor here does not depend so much on the *failure* of dignity and reasonableness to prevail but upon the *certainty* of this failure. The audience knows something that the comedian, seemingly, does not: namely, that the moment he steps out of his room he is going to be confronted with lunacy and chaos; his own assumption that what is outside his room (i.e., life) can be approached in a rational manner is so far-fetched that his attitude appears either hilarious, or refreshingly naive. This is the most primitive form of existentialist humor, and as yet the only form of it widely acceptable in America. In literature, however, or in literary appreciation, it is not unfair to assume that things have gone considerably beyond that, at least in certain fringe areas. In England they quite definitely have gone beyond that, and on a very wide front. For example, one character trait traditionally common to all young heroes in English fiction has been "heightened sensitivity"; this trait has now become "an acute sense of the absurd." David Copperfield is a prototype of the former, Lucky Jim Dixon of the latter; both are extraordinarily sensitive to the people and events around them, but the crucial difference is that David, lacking a sense of the absurd, would fail to qualify today as a cultural hero—he would not be sympathetic enough, because with all his hopeful optimism and his reverence for the powers that be, he would be considered a *dolt*. Consequently, the two terms, though antithetical in the attitudes they described in olden days, are now synonymous. When one thinks of the spate of recent protagonists in English fiction who all possess this sense of the absurd —Jimmy Porter, Sebastian Dangerfield, Charles Lumley, Billy Liar, Larry Vincent,* etc. — it is almost inconceivable that a sympathetic, leading character could now be presented, on a non-hack level, without it.

Another element common to them all is *candor*. This combination—awareness of the absurd and candor—gives rise to expressions of irreverence, so that these books are often mistakenly dismissed as being merely "novels of social criticism," and thus "creatively impure." This interpretation—that they are, by design, novels of protest, and further, that the protest is well founded—no doubt accounts in large measure for the work's popularity, whereas, actually, the "social criticism" aspect of it is simply incidental, an understandable by-product of the combination of sensitivity and candor. The real answer is that it is an existentialist literature. That it has taken such a markedly different form in England, with so strong an emphasis on humor, is inevitable—otherwise it would merely be imitative of a school, and not, as it is, culturally integrated in a deep and inviolable way.

Discounting Burrough's *Naked Lunch*, which is not available here, and discounting the early work of Henry Miller, which, even were it not banned, would now be out of date, little use has been made of this combination of sensitivity and candor in American writing. Perhaps the nearest approach to it that received any significant cultural acceptance was *Catcher in the Rye*. This is considerably less of an achievement than *Lucky Jim*, because the hero of *Catcher in the Rye* was, after all, a *child*—and, no matter how precocious, the irreverence evoked by combining sensitivity and candor, in a child, is bound to be pretty innocuous; moreover, in this particular case the irreverence was further weakened by the suggestion that the boy was about half off his rocker. The *humor*, however, was there—the existentialist humor which precedes full cognizance of "the absurd" and which theretofore had been the whole framework only in the "grotesque" (as in the Faulkner work referred to) or as "fantasy" (as in much of Nathanael West's work). The significant difference, in terms of the development of an existentialist literature indigenous to our own culture, is that the "grotesque" in Faulkner is not ordinarily read as humorous, because the highly personalized style tends to obscure it, and in West the very fact that it *is* fantasy (either in whole or part) limits it simply to that; it would seem that realism, at least as a guise, is a requisite to the absurd, and to whatever may stem from it—by realism is meant the *tone* at any given moment: the deadpan expression of the comedian as he climbs into the cab of a locomotive, the deadpan expression with which Faulkner informs us of Anse's "embarrassment" about some inconsequential detail while elaborately ignoring the old man's reaction to the stench of the coffin, the buzzards, the auger holes, etc., or again, the grotesque routing of Croft's mountain patrol by hornets in *The Naked and the Dead*, as well as certain sequences in *A Walk on the Wild Side* — outlandish situations, in short, which are neither fanciful nor self-consciously ironic, events which are not flagrantly cynical, and acts which very often produce a reader response opposite to what is ostensibly intended, or to what ordinary literary standards indicate they could produce. The future of this literature rests with writers who retain the ability of realistic surprise, and with readers who are loose enough to unbridle their response regardless of how "unprecedented" it may seem to them at the time.

Meanwhile, rich veins of the past may continue to come to light. Certainly there remain unfathomed depths of this humor in Kafka's work, especially, perhaps, in the diaries. If one *supposes* that the diaries (despite anything said, or known, to the contrary — for this deception would have been a principal part of the whole concept) were written *to be read*, that their "author" was, in fact, a creation, *then* we would know how to read, for example:

> November 11. As soon as I become aware in any way that I leave abuses undisturbed which it was really intended that I should correct (for example, the extremely satisfied, but from my point of view dismal life of my married sister), I lose all sensation in my arm muscles for a moment.

And then, too, would we be well along on the hilariously unsentimental journey we have already begun.

*From: *Look Back in Anger* (Osborn), *The Ginger Man* (Donleavy), *Hurry on Down* (Wain), *Billy Liar* (Waterhouse), *Happy as Larry* (Hinde).

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The Anonymous Walkers

J. Hillis Miller

WHEN the machinery of French criticism undertakes to assimilate a new mode of literature, it makes what Pogo might call a "fierce sight." That is true of the operations of any national criticism, but there is a special homogeneity in contemporary French criticism, and a high degree of intercommunication among the individual critics, which makes it a model of the process. The criticism, as it were, devours and digests its objects, turning them into its own substance, until at the end it is difficult to tell whether the literature exists in the books themselves or in the articles about the books.

With the publication several years ago of certain key essays, like those by Roland Barthes in *Critique* (July, 1954; Sept., 1955), French critics began to group together certain novels and to develop a common definition of their qualities. They began to talk about *"le nouveau roman."* At the center of discussion were the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor and Nathalie Sarraute, and around them those of Samuel Beckett, Jean Cayrol, Marguerite Duras, Jean Lagrolet, Robert Pinget, Claude Simon, Kateb Yacine and others, shading off as always into the lesser and the less well known. Gradually the idea of the new novel solidified as the critical articles multiplied—articles by Bernard Dort, Maurice Nadeau, Philippe Jaccottet, Bernard Pingaud, Maurice Blanchot, Jean Pouillon, Jacques Howlett and many others. Robbe-Grillet and Butor received major literary prizes (acts of criticism in themselves), and *Les Editions de Minuit* established itself as the chief publisher of the new school. The articles proliferated from journal to journal and there began to be more and more cross reference and repetition among them, until, let us say with the appearance of the special number of *Esprit* given over almost entirely to a panoramic view of the "new novel" (July-August, 1958), a universally accepted image was established.

But the novelists themselves helped in this process of grouping and definition. For it is characteristic of French writers, as opposed to most writers in England or America, not to be afraid of criticism, to write criticism themselves, and to look upon the criticism which their work arouses as an essential part of the meaning of that work. The new novelists see their work as experimental in the scientific sense: the exploration of new areas of reality. Criticism seems to them the natural way to stake out the ground they have gained. So Robbe-Grillet has published, in *La Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française, Critique, L'Express* and *France-Observateur*, a number of polemical articles justifying his work. Nathalie Sarraute has published an important book of essays on the novel, *L'Ere du Soupçon* (Gallimard, 1956). And Michel Butor's book of criticism, *Répertoire* (Editions de Minuit, 1960), contains two brief essays on his own aims in the novel, one dating from 1955, and one from 1959. Perhaps Butor's express statement in

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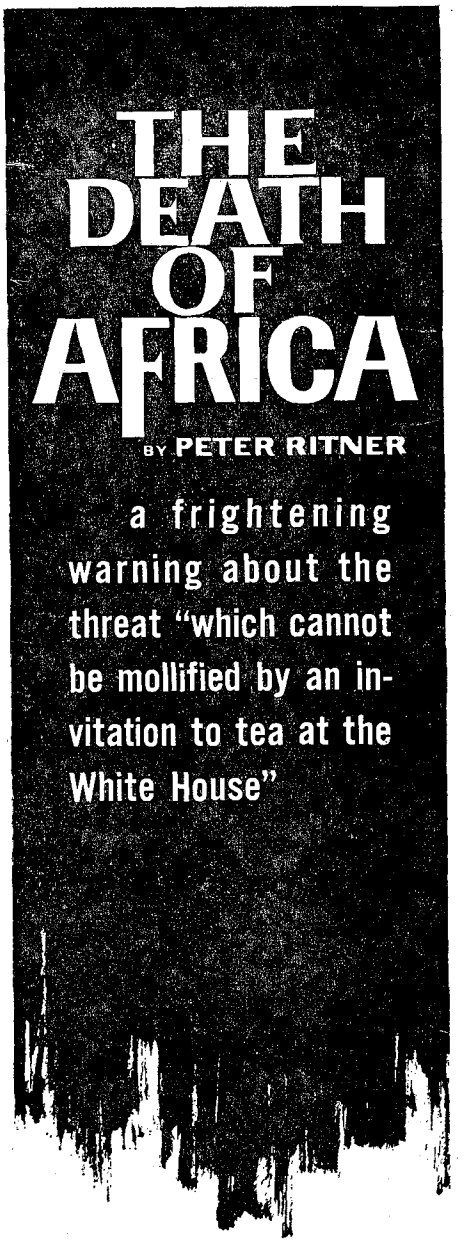
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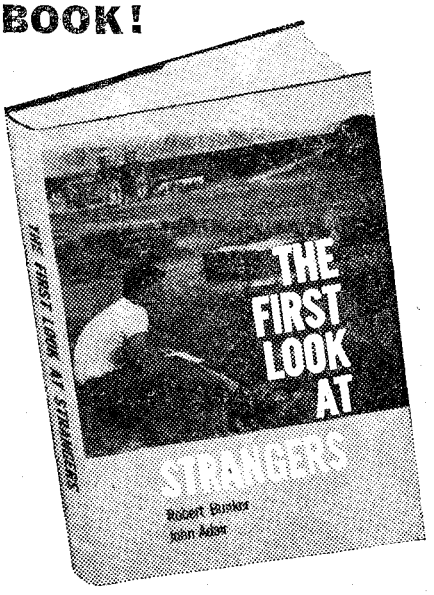

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the last of these that he looks upon the criticism his work receives as completing the act of its creation suggests the pliability of these novelists toward criticism, their willingness to believe that creation is a double process in which writer and reader, author and critic, fruitfully cooperate.

The "new novel," then, seems to be written as much to offer an occasion for criticism as to be read by the ordinary reader. But what do the critics find in these novels?

THEY FIND, first of all, that these works are most similar in their negative qualities. They are works of destruction, of dilapidation, of *modification, démystification, déconditionnement, déménagement*. All these novelists belong to what Bernard Pingaud calls *"l'école du refus"* (*Esprit*, July-August, 1958). They reject simultaneously the conventions of the traditional novel and the "givens" of the middle-class world of which that novel was the image. This rejection is both an aesthetic and a social or even political act. As aesthetic, it takes part in that general movement of all the arts in the twentieth century, which is to become conscious of themselves and of their presuppositions, to make an art about art — an art which in its very form asks how there can be such a thing as art. And as a social or political act, the refusal testifies to the loss of faith which is the effect of the cataclysmic events of our time. These novelists, like so many other people today, no longer believe in the stability and eternal validity of even the material circumstances of our civilization. They see everything from a distance, as something artificial, patched together, mechanical, something which in any case has nothing important to do with their lives, except as a threat to them. Significantly, one of the novelists, Jean Cayrol, spent time in a concentration camp, and makes the gradual reconstruction of the self after this extreme experience the theme of one of his works.

The conventions and "givens" which are put in question can be easily enumerated: the "essentialist" notion of personality; the idea of a story, with beginning, middle and end, which "happens to" the personages; and the notion of a friendly world, a world full of objects which have a human meaning, which belong to man and express him, as does his own body. Central in the tradition of the novel, especially perhaps in the English and American novel, is the idea of the fixity of character, the notion that a man has a permanent selfhood, a personality which, however modified by experience, persists through all the vicissitudes of his existence. And only such people can have a "story," a continuous series of adventures leading to a climax after which the villains are dead, and the protagonists can live happily ever after. Man is perfectly at home in such a world, and the perfect expression of his existence is someone in his own familiar household, *chez soi*, surrounded, like so many of Dickens' characters, by an environment which he possesses completely, and which is a harmonious reflection of himself.

The new French novelists put all this in question. And they often do this in the simplest way imaginable: by having their characters walk out of their rooms into the street. The images of a change of dwelling place, of a journey, or, most simply, of a peregrination through the streets, or across the landscape, or along a shore, recur again and again in these novels. The man who leaves behind the familiar room which surrounded him like a warm cocoon is in danger of undergoing a strange transformation. As soon as he enters the long street, the street which leads everywhere and nowhere, and belongs to everyone and nobody, he loses himself in a labyrinth, to borrow the title image of Robbe-Grillet's latest novel. He becomes an empty, anonymous consciousness, a mere seeing eye, without past or future, a neutral registering instrument, like the protagonists of Robbe-Grillet's *The Voyeur*, and like the central characters of so many other novels by these writers. Such a man no longer has a fixed character, a personality tied to past and future. He may undergo strange metamorphoses. He has forgotten the past, and cannot anticipate the future. He lives in a perpetual present, a present whose change is defined only by his wandering from one place to another in space. And so the old-fashioned story disappears in the same sudden shock which destroys the personality of the hero. For a man who is a mere succession of unconnected moments can have no story, no adventure like those which defined the heroes of the old novel. And, finally, this explosive destruction of man and his world is completed by a change which transforms objects. Instead of being named, close, friendly, so much a part of man that their otherness is not even noticed, objects in this alien outdoor space turn away from man, withdraw into themselves, and lose all their historical, cultural, moral and even utilitarian significance. They become simply things which are *there*, as Robbe-Grillet puts it: of such and such a shape and color, filling

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up so much of the visual space, heavy, inert surfaces, illuminated by an even clarity with no depth and no meaning. They are not even "absurd." The revelation of the frightening neutrality of inanimate objects is one of the most unsettling effects of these novels.

Everything seems to have been fragmented. The least false step out of one's own safe confines, the least doubt of the stability and coherence of the world, and all collapses at once into little pieces. Man becomes an empty mind, with no past, no future, no self, a kind of sleepwalker pacing, it may be, as in Robbe-Grillet's *La Plage,* along an utterly bare interminable beach bounded on one side by the ocean, and on the other by a perfectly regular cliff which stretches as far as the eye can see. Between any one moment and any other, between any one place and any other, between the anonymous awareness and everything in time and space, there seem to be no connections—no connections, that is, but the way they all repeat the same neutral emptiness and insignificance. By putting in question a false or outmoded world, the new novel seems to be left with no world at all.

BUT THAT is not quite the case. Like other writers before them, these novelists destroy in order to create. Their destructive rage is not entirely negative. It is an attempt to remove the façade of appearance, the debris of a vanished epoch, in order to get at what is "really there," in man and in his world.

For when we have reduced human experience to this condition of extreme bareness, two things remain: a body moving through a space full of objects, and a voice, a voice which expresses a mind. It is possible, then, to go in either of two directions, once the old world is exploded: toward objects rediscovered in their strangeness, or toward the depths of consciousness, where we can, perhaps, find what exists under the false coherence of personality. The new French novelists tend to go in one or the other of these directions.

Robbe-Grillet performs an extravagant purification of the traditional content of the novel, a purification which removes people altogether from the world, and leaves nothing but the "look" of the voyeur, registering with meticulous exactness the appearances of the world in a frozen present of spatialized time. But though his novels seem to be oriented entirely outward toward an objective world which is merely "there," and though Robbe-Grillet, in his essays, insists above all on the photographic, "descriptive," "scientific" quality of his writing, nevertheless the true secret of his novels is the way they reveal the strangeness of consciousness itself. Human consciousness is the undescribed and indescribable center of all his novels: the guilt, whether real or imaginary, of Mathias in *The Voyeur,* or the jealousy of the effaced protagonist in *Jealousy.* For though consciousness remains an indescribable absence in these novels, it is obliquely revealed by the description of objects, and such revelation is the ultimate end of these descriptions.

Nathalie Sarraute and Samuel Beckett, on the other hand, go, each in a unique way, directly toward human consciousness. Nathalie Sarraute has developed a language of subtle nuance for exploring the "infrastructures" of the mind, what Jacques Howlett calls "micropsychology," all that minute life of action and reaction, approach and withdrawal, expansion and contraction, dissolving and congealing, which goes on beneath the gross surface of personality when two human beings come in proximity to each other. Nathalie Sarraute's own term for these viscous motions of the subself, this *"sous-conversation,"* where each man is like all other men, is the title of one of her books: *Tropismes.* As for Beckett, in his novels, as in his plays, what we hear is a voice that becomes more and more emptied of content, more and more anonymous, as it attempts the impossible task of exhausting the sea, saying everything there is to say, in order to reach the desired state of total emptiness and unconsciousness. The tragedy of his novels is the inability of the mind to free itself of all content, and thus free itself from itself. This inescapable perdurability of consciousness is Beckett's definition of the human condition, and the source of the numb horror which permeates his works is the fear that it may be impossible to die.

GOING in either direction, outward or inward, it seems that these novelists, in their attempt to advance beyond a negative starting point, achieve only an even more frightening negativity. But it would be wrong to universalize this plight, for some of the novelists, for example Michel Butor and Jean Cayrol, beginning in the same fragmented situation, are able to put the world back together. Both Cayrol and Butor see life as a constant process of construction, the construction of the self and of the world which it makes for itself. They reject the a priori and frozen because it is dead, and replace it with a world which is incomplete because it is changing and vital. They write what the critics have called *"anté-romans,"* pre-

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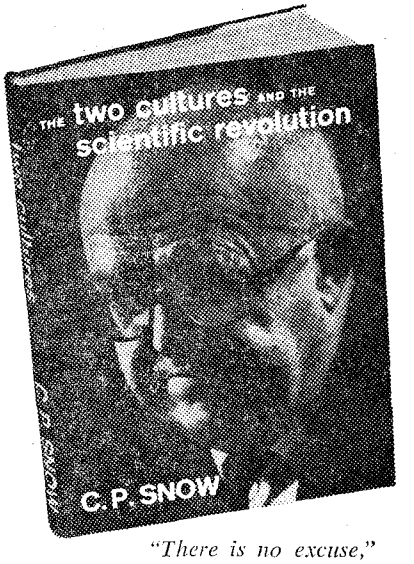

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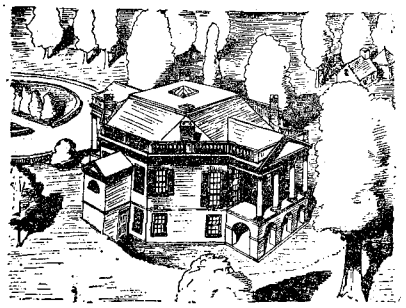

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novels. For them the novel is not a finished block of the past carved out and thrown at the reader. It is something which is made gradually, by "degrees," as the pun in the title, *Degrés*, of Butor's latest novel suggests (Gallimard, 1960). And each new image or phrase transforms all the others, as the novelist constructs his novel bit by bit. The very process of writing the novel is the living action which the novel dramatizes and, as Butor has said eloquently in his most recent essay about his work, writing a novel is for him a way of living his own life, a way of exploring and assimilating the world. Through this exploration he gives both life and world a direction and a provisional order. And so, in the same way, in Cayrol's *L'Espace d'une nuit*, the long night of searching comes to an end, day breaks, and the wanderer can at last reassume the world and recreate his own existence.

The French critics tend to emphasize in the work of these novelists the negative elements they all share in common, their desire to reject everything given and reduce the world and human existence to an extreme nudity. But, beginning there, it is possible, as Cayrol and Butor show, to reach a viable conception of human life, a vision of life as process and provisional construction. This vision has in fact not a little in common with the philosophy of phenomenology. Butor, significantly, has a degree in philosophy. He invokes phenomenology in his description of his own methods as a novelist, and it is this tradition in philosophy rather than any other which is on its own separate path pursuing the same goals as the new French novelists.

WHAT seems weakest in the assertions of both critics and novelists is the overemphasis on the originality of their methods and themes. In spite of their frequent discussion of their debt to Faulkner, Joyce and other earlier novelists, they tend to exaggerate the novelty of their enterprise. But it would probably be better to see these novelists as only carrying a little further in various directions the explosion of the traditional form and content of the novel begun by Conrad, James, Proust, Kafka, Joyce and Faulkner. It would be possible to show, for example, that all the defining elements of the new French novel exist already in a work published in England in the first decade of the twentieth century: Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. We can find there the disintegration of personality into an anonymous awareness, the image of obsessed walking through labyrinthine streets, the discovery of the strangeness of inanimate objects, and even Beckett's theme of the frightful possibility that we may not be able to die. But *The Secret Agent* is a very good novel indeed, and to say that it anticipates in some striking ways the contemporary French novel is not to detract from the validity of the latter, nor to deny the way it offers us a vital image of the present literary and social consciousness of France.

Country Full of Blondes

George P. Elliott

RAYMOND CHANDLER is dead, but he left behind five thrillers which still show every sign of life: *The Big Sleep* (1939), *The High Window* (1942), *The Lady in the Lake* (1943), *The Little Sister* (1949) and, most ambitious of them, *The Long Goodbye* (1953). There are also a dozen stories, an essay called "The Simple Art of Murder," and the last thriller, *Playback*, a sad hoked-up job that Chandler wrote during interludes in the lethal drinking bouts initiated by his wife's death. The five solid thrillers will probably be read by ordinary readers for a good while to come, so long, in fact, as the taste for violent thrillers endures and so long as Southern California has a place in people's imaginations.

Whether Chandler will ever be elected into literary history is another question. The odd thing is that he is known and enjoyed by those who have the power to vote him in — critics, writers, scholars, literary historians — and even so it begins to look as though his nomination for membership may not be seconded. To be sure, any comprehensive literary chronicle of the age will certainly list him along with Dashiell Hammett and Mickey Spillane as one of the chief practitioners of the "tough-guy mystery"; but this is indiscriminate and flattening, this has all the verve of a list of the most popular vaudeville comics in Texas during the reign of

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT is the author of Parktilden Village, *a novel set in California.*

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Hogg, this is pure chronicle. For, once out of his straight-back study and dropped into an aimless deck chair, this same chronicler knows well enough that Spillane has served up nothing but stews of slime and slop, whereas Hammett, the originator of the species, and Chandler, his chief descendant, are at least as good as any other mystery story writers whatever and probably better.

All this is well known to literary folk. I've asked around among my acquaintance and found scarcely anyone who does not know Chandler, and few who do not like him. Yet the stigma attaching to detective stories is great; they are recommended as Western movies are recommended, with uncritical guilelessness ("there's a terrific fight in it"); the type is viewed as being forbidden to serious discussion. One stalwart professor of American literature puts *The Long Goodbye* on a reading list of twenty or so modern novels; scarcely a student chooses to read it for the course; a student would rather read, say, *Studs Lonigan*, for there are serious essays telling him what to think about it and assuring him by their very existence that Farrell is *in*.

I would bet a good deal that right now (1) most of the literary folk of the country have read some of Chandler's best work with pleasure and profit but, ashamed of their pleasure, would deny it any literary value; and (2) these same people have read of Wallace Stevens' poems few more than the often-anthologized pieces, and those without anything like full comprehension or pleasure, and yet would grant high value to the body of his poetry. Well, I do not mean to suggest that I think Stevens is less than excellent or that Chandler is more than pretty good. But I do suggest that it is time we publicly honor Chandler (and Hammett his master). I suggest that, if literary history is going seriously to scrutinize bores with a vein of silver (Frank Norris, say, or James Fenimore Cooper), then it isn't too delicate to take a good look at master entertainers who are also silver-streaked.

THERE IS no use pretending that the detective story has much to recommend it as a form. In fact, I should imagine that no novel written within its conventions could be first-rate, just as no opera written within the conventions of the Broadway musical could be first-rate. (The words of a musical may not be complex or strong, and the music may be neither refined to simplicity nor developed in sustaining patterns which justify its pretentiousness; the performances might be virtuoso except that we have no schools from which coherent ensemble virtuosity of theatrical performance is likely to develop; the best we can expect is a *Porgy and Bess*, good but no more than good, well done but no more than well done.) The detective story damagingly interferes in what is of the very essence of a novel; it manipulates the motives and relationships of its characters for an artificial and trivial end. Even in those rare detective stories where the motives are credible enough and the relationships are reasonably subtle and valid, the reader is kept from apprehending them in a way that is really serious. Knowledge of motive and relationship is parceled out to him for reasons of plot excitement — a matter of some, but low, value — and this very excitement works against a profound or thoughtful or complexly moving appreciation of the characters' essential natures.

Dorothy Sayers, who was bright and only bright, tried to give her mode of fiction merit-by-association: she called *King Oedipus* a great detective story. But this, even though she may have meant it half-facetiously, is not cute; it blurs distinctions. What I discover when seeing *King Oedipus* is not whodunit nor why; like Sophocles' original audience, I already know this. What I discover and rediscover is the full significance of what Oedipus discovers — its significance to himself, to those about him, to his society — and I, who am neither king, Greek, parricide, nor mother-lover, I can experience this man's fate as man's fate, as my fate. That is the way of greatness. And the way of detective story discovery?

> I guess you and Orrin belong to that class of people that can convince themselves that everything they do is right. He can blackmail his sister and then when a couple of small-time crooks get wise to his racket and take it away from him, he can sneak up on them and knock them off with an ice pick in the back of the neck. Probably didn't even keep him awake that night. You can do much the same (*The Little Sister*).

Too bad, honey. That's *your* problem.

Chandler's novels are a good deal more successful as thrillers than as detective stories, and a thriller, as demonstrated by the example of Graham Greene (he's respectable), need not distort motive or relationship very much. It forbids that contemplation which is essential to reading great

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fiction, the movement of which is most of the time quite slow. But a thriller can do a good many things of literary value, and some of these things Chandler does admirably.

The obvious accomplishment of his thrillers is to generate a sort of nervous tension which is the literary analogue to the tension generated just by being an American citizen. Tension alone is not so much: one can induce it by chain-smoking a couple of packs of cigarettes and slugging down a fair amount of liquor, driving eighty miles an hour to a juke box joint where one drinks black coffee and plays a slot machine, then driving home again chortling every so often, "We sure had a good time, didn't we?" In fact this sort of tension-making is an unexceptional way to spend the evening in Southern California, and if Philip Marlowe did not do things like it we would not believe in him. "I didn't do more than ninety back to Los Angeles. Well, perhaps I hit a hundred for a few seconds now and then" (*Playback*).

But, as I think, these tension-making actions are only externalizings of deep and chronic and ill-conceived trouble within the actor-reader. (There is something drastically wrong with the world and with me as part of it; I don't know what it is, it isn't what they tell me it is, I don't think I could figure it out if I tried; anyhow I am afraid to look too closely.) One temporary relief from this malaise, and I think many suffer from it much of the time, is to read a story which produces in the reader a safe version of the same thing and which purges this induced tension by showing a Marlowe who figures out what's wrong with at least part of the world and then remedies it.

Good enough. This is a considerable endeavor for a novelist to undertake. To accomplish it adequately, he must have, and make us share, a clarifying and steady vision of the evil which infects the world he shows, and he must persuade us that the hero's action is more than a simple wish-fulfillment, is a possible and dignified deed however bitterly limited it may be.

Hammett's vision was of a society so corrupt that it corrupts all individual relationships; it is not surprising that he turned to left-wing politics. Spillane's murked vision was of a human nature so corrupt that no clean action is possible; it is fitting that he turned for solace to the wet-mud notions and dry-mud practices of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Chandler's vision was of a world which is no less violent, ugly, unjust, or loveless than theirs; yet it is not exactly corrupt. Moral corruption implies a prior innocent nature, whether Christian or Rousseauistic, to be corrupted. Chandler's attitude is to look at what's there in the expectation that good and evil are all mixed together; consequently he does not suffer such rage as do the other two. It is a stoic vision. In his novels Chandler did not quite sustain it, being much too romantic and not quite courageous enough to bear the full bitterness of that vision: Marlowe's solutions are morally too easy; they promise, dreamily, to remedy more than they ever could, as he recognizes, despairingly, at the end of each novel.

> What did it matter where you lay once you were dead? In a dirty sump or in a marble tower on top of a high hill? You were dead, you were sleeping the big sleep, you were not bothered by things like that. Oil and water were the same as wind and air to you. You just slept the big sleep, not caring about the nastiness of how you died or where you fell. Me, I was part of the nastiness now (*The Big Sleep*).

It is fitting that, when life afflicted him, Chandler turned to heavy drinking and despair. According to a reminiscence by Ian Fleming in *London Magazine* for December, 1959, when the police arrived at Chandler's house in La Jolla after the death of his wife, "they found him in the sitting room firing his revolver through the ceiling." A strange, appropriate gesture.

CHANDLER has a good many of the lesser virtues and vices of a romancer. Two of the locations for these are his style and the way he treats blondes.

Some of the style is of the genre—Marlowe's hyper-aggressive truth-telling, for instance. "You don't care who murdered your daughter, Mr. Potter. You wrote her off as a bad job long ago. Even if Terry Lennox didn't kill her,

At the Reading of a Poet's Will

Item. A desk
Smelling of ink and turpentine
To a man whose task
Is to sweat rain for a line.

(Once someone wanted to build
A table for
His son when the child
Outwitted his professor.

He got it clear
In his mind, a desk
So ideal not another carpenter
Dared risk

His self-esteem. He went home,
He hacked all afternoon,
The grain resisted his dream.
Later it wouldn't kindle, for the rain.)

Item. A sheaf
Of poems, a few lucid,
One or two brief,
To anyone who will bid.

Take what he pays,
Men despise what is free.
Then cut out his eyes,

Men only love what they cannot see.

(Maybe he was jaded,
Maybe he wrote too much
For compassion to touch
The things disgust included.

Well I'll just
Listen the way his sister
Does, calmly, and not pester
In her that perturbable ghost.

She loves his poetry,
Claiming though driven he was basically
kind.
I trust love, but what if she's blind
And loves what she can't see?)

Item. Praise Jesus, who spent
His last cent
In the wild woods of himself in the try
For self-mastery.

His boast
Is that though he did insist
On principle, in terror and compromise
He taught us what love's limit is.

(In the temple
When it was over,
The changers without stalls
And cast from God's favor,

Raising a smashed thumb
He cried aloud
He was the crowd
That would hammer himself to kingdom
come.

In the cry we burn.
Only pushed to its limits does a thing
excel—
Well, what if we learn
Love's aren't reached until hell?)

Item. I built a desk,
I spent myself for a sheaf.
All else I committed I ask
That the Lord forgive.

I took Christ for my pattern.
Once he was kind to a slattern.
If I was led into mazes
Blame and praise Jesus. *Amen.*

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and the real murderer is still walking around free, you don't care." But what is special about the style is Chandler's own rhinestone brilliance. Of a masters' chess game he is reconstructing by book, Marlowe says: " a prize specimen of the irresistible force meeting the immovable object, a battle without armor, a war without blood, and as elaborate a waste of human intelligence as you could find anywhere outside an advertising agency" (*The Long Goodbye*). Surely no American since Mark Twain has invented so many wisecracks as this British-educated classicist: "as gaudy as a chiropractor's chart," "he looked like a man who could be trusted with a secret—if it was his own secret." The dialogue, when it is not hobbled by plot work, is fast, glittering and tough; sometimes it includes a tawdriness that is appropriate only to the character:

> "A half smart guy," she said with a tired sniff. "That's all I ever draw. Never once a guy that's smart all the way around the course. Never once."
>
> I grinned at her. "Did I hurt your head much?"
>
> "You and every other man I've ever met" (*The Big Sleep*).

But sometimes in the narrative the tawdriness becomes Chandler's:

> In the cove the waves don't break, they slide in politely, like floorwalkers. There would be a bright moon later, but it hadn't checked in yet (*Playback*).

The famous language of his style is a fabrication based only in part on the argots of police and criminals. For this is the world of romance and the style is a romantic style. "Her hair was the pale gold of a fairy princess. There was a small hat on it into which the pale gold hair nestled like a bird in its nest. Her eyes were cornflower blue, a rare color, and the lashes were long and almost too pale."

That is the blonde of blondes, Eileen Wade in *The Long Goodbye,* and her entrance in chapter thirteen sets off three paragraphs of quite dazzling tough-guy dithyramb on blondes:

> There is the blonde who gives you the up-from-under look and smells lovely and shimmers and hangs on your arm and is always very very tired when you take her home. . . . There is the soft and willing and alcoholic blonde who doesn't care what she wears as long as it is mink or where she goes as long as it is the Starlight Roof and there is plenty of dry champagne. . . . And lastly there is the gorgeous show piece who will outlast three kingpin racketeers and then marry a couple of millionaires at a million a head and end up with a pale rose villa at Cap Antibes, an Alfa-Romeo town car complete with pilot and co-pilot, and a stable of shopworn aristocrats.

The endless come-on to the certain cheat, that is the sort of women Marlowe dreamily desires. They arouse in him lust's nervous equivalent of infatuation. They are sex appellant and they do not promise love; yet it is never the pleasures of sensuality they want. They want to use him for some other end of their own. Each time, he escapes; each next time, he forgets they are all traps. Just as he courts in each novel the dangers which brutally get him beaten up, so he succumbs each time to the glitter girls. If he wants a woman he cannot trust her.

If you say that all this provides somewhat meager fare for romance, I must agree. But if you say that this distorts life beyond recognition, I must object that you do not know that meager region, Southern California, as well as Chandler did.

HIS CHIEF accomplishment, it seems to me, is to create for the place a fictional image which corresponds to the actuality more vividly and more accurately than anything written by anyone else. Southern California has occasioned novels by solemn natives, the thrillers of James M. Cain who nearly makes it but not quite, satires by pukka sahibs and *The Day of the Locust* which contains fragments of splendid phantasmagoria. But Chandler is the authentic jinn of the place: he comes from a higher realm yet is of a rank inferior to the angels; he knows the place well and in its own terms and, as a jinn must, he influences it in turn.

If you want the feel and aspect of Los Angeles and vicinity during the thirties, forties and early fifties, you could hardly do better than to read his fictions. There is a considerable change in this fictional world between *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Goodbye*; part of this change was a deepening in Chandler as a writer and part of it was, no doubt, a result of his greater acquaintance with the region; but part of it too took place in Southern California itself. As it has grown in population, wealth and importance, its appearance has become less macabre and its vileness has turned inward, hidden behind solider false fronts.

I knew Southern California pretty well during those years, and his props

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are all genuine. If I made a list of places, people and events I have known, and mixed in with it such like from his novels, you wouldn't be able to tell fact from fantasy; for in this respect his fantasy is factual.

The desiccated old folks are there on the front porch in "wood and cane rockers . . . held together with wire and the moisture of the beach air" (*The Little Sister),* refugees from Kansas and Protestantism; they have lost their centers; they have not controlled their children or had much of anything to pass on to them; they no longer believe in the old faith or ways and have turned to cultism, avarice, distraction, despair; they are bitter, suckers, and sort of decent. Young people of striking appearances are indeed floating around all over Los Angeles, pumping gas, frying hamburgers, strutting along the beaches, projecting their personalities furiously —waiting like the old folks but waiting to be discovered. The strapless blondes with cold come-on eyes are in Chasen's restaurant, all right (as they are in Chandler's The Dancers), escorted by the middle-aged joyboys with exactly perfect suntans and blasted eyes.

THERE used to be a lion farm near Los Angeles, an ostrich farm, an alligator ranch; now there is Disneyland with animal dolls. Myself, I lived on a carob plantation not far from Riverside. (Riverside, so we were spieled at any rate, is where the Easter sunrise vigil took root in this country, and where Carrie Jacobs Bond was supposed to have written "The End of a Perfect Day" after the first sunrise service on Mt. Rubidoux — Resurrection sundae topped with canned whipped cream.) Carobs are Eastern Mediterranean trees which yield dry brown pods "used for feeding animals and sometimes eaten by man"; they are the locusts that John the Baptist ate in the wilderness; the promoters of the plantation had in mind the Southern California market of quasi-religious health food addicts. (Have you ever visited the sub-society of vegewienies, glutenburgers and blackstrap molasses? There's one in every city.) Unfortunately, the plantation's soil was not suitable to carobs, and the dictionary definition should read "almost never eaten by man."

I once caught a glimpse of detectiving; I must confess it resembled Marlowe's adventures less than the ennuis which Hammett reports from his own experience as a working detective. Back in the 1930s, when I was seventeen, a friend and I set out to see Boulder Dam. We hitched a ride to Las Vegas with a middle-aged, club-car Hoosier who said he would lend us his car to go see the dam if we would spend the next evening spying on his wife. She was there to divorce him and he suspected she was stepping out on him. At five in the afternoon she walked three blocks to a drugstore where she bought what appeared to be a pack of cigarettes and something else that appeared to be a bridge pad. At six she ate dinner with her parents, in whose bungalow she was staying. At 7:30 they began playing what appeared to be three-handed bridge, though it *might* have been gin rummy. At ten they paused for the Richfield reporter and iced tea. She and her father smoked cigarettes. Her mother chewed gum and fanned herself from time to time with a collapsible fan. They played another rubber and turned off the lights a little before midnight. No one emerged from either the front or the back door and no one entered. She was a decently dressed woman with a pleasant, low voice and brown hair, and she wore sensible shoes like a nurse. Our employer said she was a slut like all women, and regaled us with the story of a married woman he had seduced on a train a month before.

AS FOR the violence which Chandler projects, I saw little of it except in fairly safe forms. There are the cohorts of hot rods and motorcycles; the roller skating derbies, which are formless, ungamelike contests the point of which is nothing but expert roller skating and mock-violent rudeness; the destruction derbies, at which old cars are smashed head-on, once two old locomotives. But most of all there is the chronic, self-exacerbated nervous tension, of the sort Chandler (a lapsed Quaker) both records and generates, which yearns toward violence for its relief.

Not the least source of this tension is the inflaming sexual provocation on every side; yet the provocation is not toward licentiousness but toward the fantasies of mere frustration. These folk are refugees from the Protestant Midwest, but they brought the forms with them. The titillation aims at marriage (the divorce rate in Hollywood is a bit lower than the national average) but not true marriage necessarily; when the form of marriage loses its content, what enters is not pretty—irascibility, for example, and sex for its own sake only it's inexpert sex, and the cold clutch of conjugal possessiveness. To be sure, there are the simply promiscuous: a film actor I know was accused by a world-famous 40-26-40 blonde of being

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a queer because he did not try to make her the second day of their acquaintance; when he objected that she was engaged to be married within the month, as every Hedda Hopper reader knew, and that he was faithful to his wife and had three children, she shrugged at him for being so square. And there are the very bizarre: a fellow I went to high school with was sent up for flagrant necrophilia with an officer's wife. But all such only substantiate Chandler's version: the sex is mostly in the nerves, very little in the heart. In the heart, if nothing else, there are cars.

Waiting in the grandstand one summer evening in 1950 for the auto races to start in San Bernardino, I watched the crowd as the little warm-up entertainments came along. Mostly there was M.C. patter alternating with popular records; some announcements; a local hillbilly in a Monkey Ward cowboy hat; the Indianapolis speedway winner of many years before to say a few words to us. The crowd rustled. Then the Orange Bowl Beauty Contest Queen (or some such) was crowned. She was a pink and tan girl in a short bare-shouldered pale blue organdy dress with a crimson silk sash; she was not quite used to high heels yet and wobbled; she had a Coca-Cola smile, and she sang a slinky night club song in a bouncy high school voice. The crowd scarcely paused in its restless chatter and not a wolf whistled. But then the '51 Dodge was driven about the track, and the '51 Chrysler, and the crowd fell silent; we were the first laymen to see them; and when the latest Jaguar slid out before our eyes, a rustle of sincere, abysmal reverence stirred among the people. The girl—the girl would turn into a starlet or a wife; but the Jag, now there was something one could trust.

And the architecture of that land: there are blue Dutch windmills selling pastries and handsome Mediterranean villas in Beverly Hills and — but why go on? There used to be lots of gimmicky developments: Venice, for example, which currently abounds with beatniks, was conceived as a stucco pleasure world with motorized gondolas on calm artificial canals, but it became a stucco-bungalow town with some dry, paved ditches in it and a rickety amusement park. If you object that such projects occur all over the nation, who's to deny you? Southern California is one of the dream centers of the world —though not of the best dreams maybe —and it's not only responsibilities that begin in dreams. Ten miles northwest of Times Square there is a hundred foot, decaying, stucco, pseudo-watchtower proclaiming an undevelopment complete with artificial fishponds, unkempt plantings and a few lawned houses. It resembles nothing so much as a giants' seedy miniature golf course inhabited by commuting little ones. Marlowe could have followed up a lead there, one with dishwater blondes. . . . Nowadays in Southern California (as everywhere) the developments are mass-produced suburbias.

THIS whole hard-boiled, fantasy-sopped world which Chandler observed about him and which he suggests so sharply in his fiction, he takes pretty much at its own evaluation. Marlowe is the guy so wised up that he begins to think everything is rigged; desiring both love and justice, he settles (in the rigged society he sees) for ungratified lust and half-remedied injustices; and he provokes a violence which is not quite purging because it is not a punishment. This, however effective, is murky; yet I would maintain it expresses quite well the actual place—the people of those 666 developments that would like to be a city.

Still, Chandler's version is not *the* version of Southern California. He, rather more than is strategic in a writer, puts himself at the mercy of the place's notion of itself; for this notion is self-deceiving, somewhat inaccurate and confused. Marlowe sets some things straight and he sees through some of the shams, but finally he does not know what he wants; he learns over and over that he's not as smart as he thought he was and that what was most wrong has not been seen through at all; he goes through the forms but they are almost empty. Like the chess he turns to; for instance, at the end of *The High Window*:

> I went home and put my old house clothes on and set the chessmen out and mixed a drink and played over another Capablanca. It went fifty-nine moves. Beautiful cold remorseless chess, almost creepy in its silent implacability.

Chandler saw his region not just as it saw itself but in his own way too. And his version of it was so congenial and so strong that it affected his readers' versions. Chandler's fictions are one of the reasons Southern California now is seen as it is seen.

If you object that in the long view this is not so much for a writer to do, I cannot disagree. What I would maintain, though, is that he did as much as the J. F. Coopers of our literature ever did and that his novels are, for the time being, a lot more fun to read.

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A Fix in the Igloo

Marcus Klein

AMONG some other things that the fix might be—an entertainment, an ingroup snigger, the work of the devil—it is an imitation of action, one that is as dead serious as dying, complete to the point of solipsism, and of a certain magnitude. Through self-pity and fear and cellular destruction it effects the catharsis of all emotions.

Among other things the junkie among us might be, would be—an entertainer, Lamia, mythopoet, the devil's own child—he is an imitation of the swollen-footed, self-punishing hero who tore out his eyes when he found that something was wrong with his sex life. Swollen-armed (a new kick), crazy with hubris ("I don't use, I just joy-pop"), often homosexual when he is sexual, insinuating when he is friendly, pouting when he is not, a simple guy, really, whose heroics are so openly fraudulent they might charm a *Time-Life* Beatnik, he is one whose tic of self-defense has become a Bee that stings, a Monkey on the back, a Habit that is more stringent than yours or mine. The tic now wags that gray junkie face. He boosts or pimps or cons or pushes, because not everyone will hire a man with trouble on his face, because habits average between $100 and $200 a week, and because a man must have an occupation. Or if of independent means and mind, he makes it by researching narcotics—*vide* William S. Burroughs, a legend in his time, a junkie Odysseus who has traveled in many lands to cop a fix.* He contemplates his skin, when he's not on the nod, is fascinated by the functions of his body, because he has put his troubles into them, and regularly two or three times a day he empties himself of himself.

Like Oedipus, he knows that to live with oneself is to suffer.

Why suffer, friends? (Oedipus, of course, did not use narcotics.)

It is better not to know.

Pop goes the needle!

Which is to say that one of the functions of the junkie among us is to serve as an example. He is suddenly exemplifying in a modest geyser of novels, plays, stories and essays.

Some of what is tossed up is not

*Now an ex-junkie. In the *Evergreen Review* for January-February, 1960, Burroughs bids farewell to fifteen years of the cold inside and recommends the same to friends.

MARCUS KLEIN, who teaches in the English department of Barnard College, has contributed criticism and fiction to Hudson Review, Western Review *and other periodicals. He is now completing a study of the novel since mid-century for publication by Meridian.*

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example, but junkie exposé, a spout of the secondary facts of dope: broken homes, prostitution, police beatings, withdrawal vomitings, battery-acid hot-shots for stool pigeons. Some of that, when it avoids transcending itself into either fiction or a diffuse appeal for more urgent social working, has power. Clarence L. Cooper's *The Scene,* a novel ineptly devised, almost overwhelmed by a subsidiary story of moral growth in the narcotics squad, almost lost in an irrelevant yearning for brotherhood and understanding, breaks from its errors into horrors which one knows to be authentic.

Some of what is tossed up is sentimental—there was Michael Gazzo's play of a few seasons ago, *A Hatful of Rain,* about the addict as pure victim. Johnny Pope's father didn't love him, and his brother didn't love him intelligently, and the love of his pusher, named "Mother" (ah, that is where the story should have been), Mother's love was sinister, and Johnny through no fault of his own was hooked, and even the love of his lovely wife was not perfect, but one can understand that because no young wife wants her home turned into a heroin shooting-gallery. But things turn out all right. Johnny confesses and delivers himself over to the Law. A nice play for those who miss Mr. Coffee Nerves.

There is an effluvium, too, that is quite simply revolting. I hold a book of cartoons, precisely a series of antique engravings surrounded by a deliberately humorous narrative, if that is your humor, called *Fuzz Against Junk* (quaint title) by somebody named Akbar del Piombo. It is a freak-show, a gallery of cataleptics, syphilitics, bearded ladies, zulus, tattooed grotesques, Victorian gentlemen, ladies with malformed limbs, sufferers of gout and, apparently, rheumatism, and other unusual folk who—and this is the point—can at a certain ironic remove be identified as addicts, pushers, and the few other familiars of what the author must think a narcotics subculture. It is a book for those who are in the business, who must, like other businessmen, like students and lodge members, appreciate being joshed now and then by professional acquaintances. Or it is for those who like to be revolted, for there are such.

These junkies are not exemplary.

There is a shower of lyrics, too, some very dainty, of marijuana, mescalin and other hallucinatory non-addicting drugs. Terry Southern's "Red-Dirt Marihuana" is, with tenderness and much grace, a rural initiation ceremony; a boy learns from a Negro field hand the secrets of pot and some of the craftiness of manhood. Jack Green writes currently in a lower-case, unpunctuated essay, "peyote": "i think i was a better person on peyote than i am now." One can't know. But it is a pleasant essay and, anyway, it is the feeling of grace that matters.

IN THE dark junkie place, however, marijuana and peyote and their analects are the stuff of dreams and the very fragrance of innocence. ("Marijuana," says Leach in Jack Gelber's play, *The Connection,* "no, I don't have any pot. But how quaint of you to ask.") What users use (and kids out for kicks not allowed)—heroin, morphine, other opium derivatives, cocaine and such—is not hallucinating, dreams aren't cool, and the object of junk is the habit itself.

Those who are exemplary—Burroughs (who is also William Lee, the author of a novel called *Junkie*), Gelber, and most recently Alexander Trocchi—those who find themselves of consequence for the time and the place by living a junkie fable, exemplify removal from the welter of Becoming into a stasis that might be Being; they attest the possibilities of abdication from an office of daily living which is once again and always too much for any man; they attest the choice of the soul's refrigeration, for this is a time when wonderful things are to be done with physico-chemical therapy, and if one is to be allowed a choice between the H-Bomb and bombing with H. . . . They exemplify the return to the womb, too—look, you can almost *do* it—that misses being suicide. Or, if you like, they demonstrate the possibilities of backward evolution—Burroughs lives his fable in constant metaphors of reptiles, gigantic insects, pulsating larvae, absorbing protoplasms.

The junkie is the master of that gimmick by which existence is to be freed of the universal fates and the daily fates. The hero of Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book* substitutes heroin for his wife, Moira. The Moirae, the Fates, make demands of domestic reality, and wives are always uncertain. In fact the shot, for those who focus their sexuality on the needle, is not slack or uneventful, it has its courting ritual (dropper, collar, No. 26 needle, cooking), its teasing of the vein, and there is always the possibility of air-bubbles—the possibility that they will kill you. There is the opposite possibility, too, that this time, darling, you might not be satisfied. But the tech-

A Corpse for the Carriage Trade

All of a sudden the decent trash
Pushed up at me something horrid,
Shining, real, and dead-looking: *rat.*
— Recognized rat stacked on the packaging
Gathered outside squeegeed windows, in front
Of the negligees, monogrammed silks, and forced ivy.

All of a sudden as I,
Filling an overcoat into the wind
Of winter walked by, my eye flicked this thing
So sheeny and dark, and so dead, which said to me
Ten paces later, my god, they're alive by the hundreds
If this one is dead, flounced by a car as he roamed from the river.

As I tried to rub from my mind
The image of this football-fat and purpling thing
With a tapered supple tail, I wondered how such
Innocent evil — luckily dead — could survive in a cluster
Of bricked facades with aluminum edgings which squeeze
Out the cold, which must be to rats the last of resorts
On a freezing night; I wondered how all this could be.

Then I remembered slick swarms on the bank
Of the sewered and mill-muddied river, began
To feel sorry for rats in a city, desperately toothing
Cement everywhere. Then I thought of the babies whose faces
Have fattened such rats in a thousand city backyards, and looked
For a stout stick, but found none. I strode along quicker —
All children behind me — determined to call
A city offical, and threaten to publicly die,
Unless the big city could pluck this lone rat from my eye.

CHARLES PHILBRICK

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niques of heroin are all in all much simpler than those of marriage. The great variable is removed. The Other disappears into a consummation so perfect that marriage and indeed the whole of living in this world is just like being alone.

To contract the world's soul and drive it into the glasses of one's glassy eyes is, moreover, total occupation. "That's the trouble in this damn country," says a character in Trocchi's novel, "You take shit and it becomes your profession." But it is a trouble chosen. "Junk," says Burroughs speaking as William Lee, "is not, like alcohol or weed, a means to increased enjoyment of life. Junk is not a kick. It is a way of life." The object of junk is the habit: the need which has the semblance of purpose, and the regimen which the need invents.

Like Benjamin Franklin on his scene, the junkie meets the day in a series of planned practical maneuvers, and the day becomes its maneuvers of buying and shooting and waiting cunningly to buy and shoot again. There is pleasure in that, there is the feeling of easy mastery in it. Not too easy, to be sure. It is the junkie's good fortune that the narcotics traffic is illicit. How stale the discipline of copping and fixing would be if it were not, if it were no more than a stamp-collecting or a home-carpentry habit, the imitation of a meaningful action for only one's most desperately idle hours.

The meaning of heroin, Herbert Gold has said, is that it causes *real* trouble. Junk is therefore something to do. Something, it should be added, that a few virtuosi can do superbly. The pusher in *The Connection* is called Cowboy, presumably because he pushes Horse, but also, presumably, because the junkie-pusher meets the mythic requirements of the cowboy, a man who has been provided by a simplified, and falsified, society with a distinct and simple purpose, to clean up Dodge City, a man who can ride skillfully enough, draw fast enough, and shoot straight enough to clean the stables of the rustlers. The junkie, too, is a straight-shooter who has something to do.

The junkie lives alone, then, in a myth

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of self-sufficiency and sufficient purpose. An attractive one, it would seem, else why this rage of testifying?

Perhaps because the addict is a social fact. Because major crimes are incident to the narcotics business. Because addiction is not susceptible to easy cure. Because there is so much money in narcotics. Because there are youngsters who can be seduced into thinking heroin an imperative of pubescence.

TRUE, and not sufficient truth. Addicts make considerable statistics—45,000 in the United States, it is officially estimated, 25,000 concentrated in New York City—but not such as would make your head swim. Jaywalking is a larger fact. Heroin is sickening, but it is not lethal except in an overdose, and the suffering attendant upon it is largely a private matter. The crimes committed in its name attend on the fact that it is in the first place illegal. (Then make it legal.) The traffic runs into hundreds of millions of dollars yearly, but more money is exploded in a few good afternoons at the shooting gallery at Cape Canaveral. The child who trembles for a first fix that he might become a man has prior problems, and anyway the pedarist who once turns him on will not make him an addict. Addiction is not so easy a matter. You have to work at it.

It is not the junkie but the junkie's fabulous shadow that is news. The life of the drug, retreat under discipline ("There is no more systematic nihilism than that of the junkie in America."—Trocchi), might be a metaphor that will tell us who we are (our own poisoned blood; waiters who wait for another round of waiting); where we are (Nowhere, man; Heaven, man); where we are going ("One is no longer grotesquely involved in the becoming. One simply is."—Trocchi. "Running out of veins and out of money."—Burroughs); how to live (a man has his freedom; you can be very cool, man; you don't have to live). And these matters are important. In a time of confusions and staggering possibilities of treachery, of engineered ideas and disillusion in the areas of volition and purpose, these metaphysical matters are imperative.

And these are, with open intention, the matters that move the fabling junkies. Their first impulse is literary. The scene they make is established and populated not, as one might have thought, by uncool Coleridge, dreamy de Quincey—they had dreams—but by Sartre, Camus, Unamuno, Gide, latterly by Samuel Beckett and Jean Genêt. They are well-read junkies, they will tell you so, and the junk came afterwards, as an opportunity for creation. (The pied piper, one supposes, was Burroughs. *Big Table 2* is partially a *Festschrift*, and if you will search the incunabula of the pot-smoking Beats, you will find many tributes to him.) Heroin is, in a word, naturalized Existentialism.

The hero of the Existentialist drama faces nothingness or acknowledges absurdity, discovers existence, and often the necessity for authentic self-creation. That is what the junkie would be about. Jack Gelber pauses at the first rung. Burroughs mounts to the second. Trocchi goes over the top.

BUT junk as a specific literary matter proposes its own literary problems. Addicts for real, whose lives are to be given to addicts as Existential heroes, are narcotized. They function, but with diminished feeling, diminished intelligence, as in an igloo of the body. Cool, man. Life in an igloo is a way of life, but it is not an interesting way. Something can be got from it, to be sure. Nelson Algren a decade ago in *The Man With the Golden Arm* found uses for it, if only as a control for an otherwise plotless novel, but a novel concerned with other ways of life. Herbert Gold in *The Man Who Was Not With It* made of the hard belly-crawl out of the igloo a narrative of involvement and love, and in a recent story, "What's Become of Your Creature?" he makes of the perilous way in, a narrative of need become self-hatred. These are superior fictions for which the cycle of addiction performs the service of local metaphor. When the metaphor becomes the subject, when the Eskimo as he huddles is all the hero there is, then the risks of boredom are very great. Burroughs and Trocchi, and Gelber, sometimes, are men of fine verbal facility and so much is saved, but it is after all not surprising that they run to formlessness. *The Connection* is an "improvised" drama, licensed by Pirandello. *Naked Lunch* is a grab-bag which does not always expose its contents. Trocchi ends his novel with the observation that he has not yet begun to write it, and he is right. Nothing has yet happened in it.

And there is the error. The junkie drama is one in which nothing happens. Junkies don't talk to one another. Junkies don't move.

And one cold Eskimo is not a significant story.

A Strategy for James Readers

Louis Auchincloss

IN APPROACHING the great prolific novelists of the last century, it is usually safe for the uninitiated reader to start at the top, with *Vanity Fair* for Thackeray or *David Copperfield* for Dickens. But nobody should try to begin Henry James with *The Golden Bowl.* And if the beginner should happen to start with *The Awkward Age* and to follow it up with *The Sacred Fount,* he might well be conditioned for life to finding nothing but snobbishness and triviality in any of the other works. It is better to face at the outset that there will always be a certain number of people to agree with Theodore Roosevelt's dictum that James's "polished, pointless, uninteresting stories about the upper social classes of England make one blush to think that he was once an American." It is not, however, necessary to turn, instead, as Roosevelt did, to the "fresh, healthy, out-of-doors life" of Kipling. One can learn, with a little application, to isolate the dross in James, and after that *The Jungle Book* is no substitute. Once the reader has been acclimatized to the different Jamesian styles, once he has felt the intensity of James's devotion to an aesthetic ideal, he can be safely exposed even to such dreary minor pieces as *Glasses* or *Fordham Castle.* Who knows? He may even like them. For by that time he will have become a Jacobite, and the true Jacobite can delight in any prose of the master.

James himself was once consulted on the order in which he should be read. In 1913 he made two reading lists for Stark Young, "the delightful young man from Texas." But he omitted the short stories (the "little tarts" could wait until after the "beef and potatoes"), and he insisted (contrary to the advice of many of his critics) on being read in the revised edition. Each of his suggested reading lists contains only five titles, the first: *Roderick*

LOUIS AUCHINCLOSS is a lawyer and a novelist; his most recent novel is Pursuit of the Prodigal *(Houghton Mifflin).*

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Hudson, The Portrait of a Lady, The Princess Casamassima, The Wings of the Dove, The Golden Bowl, and the second: *The American, The Tragic Muse, The Wings of the Dove, The Ambassadors, The Golden Bowl.* Both lists have in common with this piece the goal of bringing the new reader as rapidly as possible to what E. M. Forster calls the "valuable and exquisite sensations" of the final novels. But it seems to me that the recommended steps are too short and that *Roderick Hudson* is an actual stumbling block. That James was not the best judge of his own earlier work is shown by his omission of *Washington Square* and *The Bostonians* from the revised edition. My purpose is to present a somewhat more comprehensive list for the beginner, and with this in mind I have divided James's writing life into five periods:

First (1866-1880): This initial period opens with a great clump of short stories reminiscent in style and treatment of Hawthorne. They are well organized and smoothly written, but they incline at once to the prolix and melodramatic. None of them even suggests the full development of the later James. There is little to recommend to the beginner from this period but two novels: *The American* and *Washington Square.* The latter, James's most finished work to that date, really inaugurates the second period.

Second (1880-1890): This I will call the "Balzac" period. James may well have felt in this decade that he had settled on the kind of novel that he would write for the rest of his life: three-volume Balzacian compendium of diverse characters plotted around a contemporary social problem. To many readers it is his finest period. Surely it is hard to pick and choose among such novels as *The Portrait of a Lady* (the conflict between Americans soiled and Americans unsoiled by a dark, beautiful, ancient Europe); *The Bostonians* (the cause of women's suffrage as an arena for sex antagonism); *The Princess Casamassima* (the danger that world revolution may destroy more than it brings) and *The Tragic Muse* (the question of art as a substitute for a political career). The style of these novels is of a dazzling virtuosity; there are passages in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Bostonians* as beautiful as any prose James ever wrote. But they did not sell as widely as their author had hoped, and he turned to the theatre in search of the popular success that he so coveted.

Third (1890-1895): This is the period of dramatic experiment, ending with the famous booing of the author at the opening of *Guy Domville.* The most remarkable thing about James's plays is that any of them were produced at all. They read like thin, wordy parodies of his poorest fiction and are pervaded

Tragedy in Garden City

This man's head was brush-cut, like his lawn.
His view of Nature allowed that Nature
Was the producer of ergs, dyns and decibels,
Microns and photons and so many shoes to the cubic foot,
And that all these things in turn produced
Hot point and cold spot and split-level Cadillac.
Scientists in white test tubes took Nature
Wherever it was to be found, and cleverly
Issued it in plastics, repellants, and miracle whip,
To be interpreted by experts in tables
Of comparative happiness based on the relative
Consumption of pacifiers, bonds, and soap.
And society progressed.

Only, in spring and summer, this man,
Observing the multitude of dandelions,
Of hawkweed and thistle, daisy, buttercup
And bladderwort, found that he was appalled
By the uselessness of all these wavering
Vanishers, which never became
Sunoco or Dreft or Unicef; he wondered
Why Science hadn't taken these things in hand
(Year after year, year after year) — until one night,
After the household was asleep, he crept out
And harnessed three million dandelions to his house,
And waited.

HOWARD NEMEROV

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with a repellent heartlessness. They should be concealed at all cost from the would-be Jacobite. He wrote no novels in this period, but kept his fictional hand in practice with a series of short stories written in a clear, finished style that lacks the verbosity of his first period and the involutions of his last. But these stories also lack the warmth and color of the prose of his *Portrait of a Lady* period; there is a thinness of material and a growing preoccupation with the fantastic and supernatural. But if there are less high points in this period of fiction, there are also no low ones. The beginner may roam at will from *The Lesson of the Master* to *The Altar of the Dead.*

Fourth (1895-1901): This is the "bad" period, to be avoided almost entirely until the reader has been converted. Biographically it is interesting, for it reveals a James struggling to pull out of the disappointment of his failure as a dramatist and popular novelist and to achieve his own unique medium. But such a struggle was bound to be saturated with bitterness, and some of it seeps into his work, giving it a peculiar shrillness and silliness. Peeping behind the curtain of art at the small resentments that the author exposes, we glimpse the diner-out who is obsessed with the decline of manners in London high life, the esthete who prefers houses and ornaments to people, the prude who is shocked by sex. Of course, all of these attitudes can be found in the earlier and later work: Hyacinth Robinson in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) gives up his plans for world revolution because it might muddy the translucent waters of the aristocratic way of life, the contemplation of which must be the eternal solace of the poor, and *A Round of Visits* (1910) transfers the author's high-pitched anger at London hostesses to those of New York. But it is in this period that these attitudes seem most, as James would put it, to "bristle." It is the period of the damp, crushed spinster heroines, of Fleda Vetch of *The Spoils of Poynton* and the telegraph girl of *In the Cage,* who live to observe and who cannot handle the overwhelming, suffocating vulgarity that surrounds them. Like Maisie they know *everything,* and their comfort is in renunciation, a renunciation that smacks of a disdain to participate.

The Compassionate Torturers

A Transmutation from the French of Victor Hugo

Torture chambers are not pleasure domes.
No-one lives more than five hours in such rooms.
The young men who go in come out grown old.
The artist-torturer, the judge, impelled
one by his craft, the other by the code,
devote themselves to work upon the soft
medium of human flesh, conspire to join
red iron and Roman law, and spare no pain
to win the avowal needed. At their touch
hair, muscle, nail, and bone feel horror's twitch.

Loudness of screams is governed by which fiber
shudders, which nerve responds to that skilled labor.
A man becomes a harpsichord whereon
the bloody fingers of the player run
the scales of agony. Do not be sure
the hearts of torturers hold nothing more
than menace, for this duty makes them grieve.
They sweeten torture with a touch of love.

Resistance saddens them, and as they broach
body, to come at mind, their tongues beseech.
They are paternal as they supplicate,
stooping above the sufferer, regret
the need to blind an eye to make the mouth
vomit, in its extremity, an oath.

There have been torturers of a grain so fine
they've quoted poems to assuage the pain
and coax the secret that the captive kept.
And others, big with empathy, have wept.

DILYS LAING

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Too many Jacobites have tried to explain away the silliness of this period by reading other things into it. I think it is better to face it directly like the audiences of *The High Bid* (James's dramatization of *Covering End*) who burst into applause (to the dismay of the author who never intended it) when Captain Yule cried: "I see something else in the world than the beauty of old show-houses and the glory of old show-families. There are thousands of people in England who can show no houses *at all*, and I don't feel it utterly shameful to share their poor fate!"

The best writing of this period is in *The Spoils of Poynton* which prefigures James's ultimate style, but the masterpiece is *The Turn of the Screw*. Perhaps one of the reasons for its success is that James never tells us explicitly of what the "evil" consists. If it is simply that Quilt and Miss Jessel have had an affair which has not been concealed from the children, one is back with the indignant obsessions of this period.

Fifth (1901-1911): Quite suddenly we emerge from the timber into the high, golden light of the final period and meet in dazzling succession the three last novels, *The Wings of the Dove, The Ambassadors* and *The Golden Bowl*. These have created for James the special niche in the history of literature that was the objective of a lifetime of devoted work. Gone now is the shrill anger at bad manners and sexual irregularity. A benign wisdom instead pervades the atmosphere. The evil in *The Wings of the Dove* is not in the affair between Kate Croy and Merton Densher; it is in their concealment of it from an ailing girl whose money they are after. When Densher pounds the streets of a storm-swept Venice while Millie Theale faces a lonely death in her palazzo, we know, as nowhere in the earlier James, the agony of remorse. And in *The Ambassadors* when Strether at last discovers what everyone else has always known, that Chad Newsome is living with Madame de Vionnet, that he is enjoying the common or garden love affair with the older married woman that is the conventional oat-sowing of the rich young American before his return to the family business, there is no implication that Chad is "evil." It has simply been Strether's naïveté that has made him see another relationship in the affair. But this very naïveté, stripped of James's earlier bitterness and radiant with a new perception, is what lifts Strether above Chad and his mistress. As E. M. Forster puts it: "The Paris they revealed to him—he could reveal it to them now, if they had eyes to see, for it is something finer than they could ever notice for themselves, and his imagination has more spiritual value than their youth."

The remaining stories, except for *The Jolly Corner*, represent a falling off to be expected in old age. The subject matter is more trivial, the style more elaborate. One senses the aging master, sure now of a small but devoted following who will wait indefinitely for the *mot juste*; we can almost hear the prefatory cough, the chuckle as it is finally produced and dangled before their gleaming eyes. But what of that? The master has already given us his best.

LIKE James himself, I would submit two lists to the "delightful young man from Texas" of today. My first I believe to be foolproof, but it is a bit long, involving nine steps and a variety of alternatives:

1. *The American,* or *Washington Square,* or *The Aspern Papers,* or *Daisy Miller* and *The Europeans*
2. *The Portrait of a Lady*
3. *The Bostonians* or *The Tragic Muse*
4. Any two of the following short stories: *The Lesson of the Master, The Death of the Lion, Greville Fane, The Abasement of the Northmores, The Real Thing, The Liar, The Altar of the Dead*
5. *The Turn of the Screw,* or *The Spoils of Poynton*
6. *The Beast in the Jungle,* or *The Jolly Corner*
7. *The Ambassadors*
8. *The Wings of the Dove*
9. *The Golden Bowl*

My second is less sure, but it is for those with less time for fiction:

1. *Washington Square*
2. *The Portrait of a Lady*
3. *The Aspern Papers*
4. *The Turn of the Screw*
5. *The Ambassadors*
6. *The Wings of the Dove*

It would be preferable to add some of the short stories to the second list, but time, I know, is precious. One shudders to consider what James, who found his own era too full of noise and distraction, would have thought of ours. Except one should remember that he loved the typewriter and the automobile. He might have loved the jet plane. It is interesting to ponder the fate of Daisy Miller in a Rome only a few hours by air from Schenectady.

Books by Contributors

In the past few years, *The Nation* has become a fertile hunting ground for book publishers alert to contemporary ideas and problems. Substantial parts of the following books, recently published, appeared first in this magazine.

Is There an American in the House? By David Cort. Macmillan. $3.95.

The Future of Public Education. By Myron Lieberman. University of Chicago Press. $5.

An Epidemic of Genius. By Ira Wolfert. Simon & Schuster. $4.50.

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The Pleasures of Pound

THRONES: 96-109 DE LOS CANTARES. By Ezra Pound. New Directions. 126 pp. $3.50.

IDEAS INTO ACTION: A STUDY OF POUND'S CANTOS. By Clark Emery. University of Miami Press. 196 pp. $4.50.

A CASEBOOK ON EZRA POUND. Edited by William Van O'Connor and Edward Stone. Thomas Y. Crowell Co. 179 pp. $2.50 paper.

M. L. Rosenthal

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,
Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,
For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.
(Hugh Selwyn Mauberley)

DID ANYONE ever state the issue better than Pound in this poem written at the end of the First World War? I mean, as a poetic realization of the loss, the betrayal of the young in the name of values neglected except in the rhetoric of war itself? But the poem has its own life in the sad, bitter passion of the opening and closing stanzas and in the tragic pause, for an endless moment, of the second stanza. "Quick eyes gone under earth's lid"—a pure instance of that "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" which Pound long ago asserted a true image should be.

The hardest thing in art is to get the emotion right and at the same time keep the artist's shadow from dimming out the picture. Pound's poetry at its best is a poetry of absolute distinction, the rhythmic units cleanly defined and vibrant, the voice at once intense and removed, and everything subordinated to the form of the poem itself. Try to find another poem that succeeds as Pound's "The Return" does in catching the irreversible pity represented by the fading of the gods and heroes of ancient civilizations. Its pathos is without sentimentality; it inheres in what is presented rather than in anything in the tone extraneous to the picture evoked:

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
and half turn back;
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"
Inviolable. . . .

A good deal of poetry in any age, including poetry of rather exalted reputation, is awesomely garrulous. I shall cite only Robinson's "The Man Against the Sky" as an example of the poet so in love with the sound of his own voice that no sacrifice, not even that of the poem, is too great for it. Only the deepest self-love can explain Robinson's letting himself get away with something like this:

If after all that we have lived and thought,
All comes to Nought,—
If there be nothing after Now,
And we be nothing anyhow,
And we know that,—why live?

Why live indeed? After such lines, what forgiveness? The revolution that Pound helped lead was precisely against this kind of verbose banality, our post-Victorian heritage. Pound has his stylistic flaws. His *Thrones,* the latest group of *Cantos,* begins with two lines of Greek, takes the next two in English, is mostly French (with a pinch of English) in the fifth, is English again in the sixth and seventh, turns to Latin in lines eight through ten, and so continues its polylingual way for 124 pages. It would be hard even for the specialist *aficionados* to deny that the Master is overdoing it, and that some of the initial impetus of the *Cantos*—begun more than four decades ago—has been lost. Yet those Graeco-Anglo-Franco-Roman lines *are* brilliant; and when Pound rises toward his lyrical heights, few poets can do anything comparable:

Selena, foam on the wave-swirl
Out of gold flooding the peristyle
Trees open in Paros,
White feet as Carrara's whiteness. . . .

Pound overdoes—no question of it. But it is the excess of a man with more than enough to say. Even though one could wish he might spend the second seventy-five years of his life condensing and reorganizing the *Cantos,* one must recognize the poem for what it is: a gigantic work-in-progress of a new kind, the boldest experiment in poetry of the twentieth century, the continuous expression through more than half his lifetime of one of the most gifted of modern poets. Its growth in time has been essential to its very nature. Each group of cantos is a new phase, with new clusters of knowledge and association linked with the old through interweavings, repetitions and the driving central continuity. The process is an outgrowth of Pound's engrossment, and of the engrossment of modern poetry as a whole, with sensuous presentation through the concrete image, the realized moment and the organically accurate movement of phrase and line and larger units. Behind it all lies a concept of poetic communication as something that grows on the reader as a series of experiences might.

The driving central continuity is fairly simple, despite the poem's complexity in detail. The *Cantos* begins with a rendering of part of Book XI of the *Odyssey,* the *Nekuia* or *Book of the Dead.* Here Odysseus gives his hair-raising account of evoking the "souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead." *Canto 1* presents the story in a few lines of superb reconstruction. Then, toward the end of the canto, the speaker reveals himself as the re-embodied Odysseus rather than the original one. He is the "I" of Pound's poem, the Odyssean modern sensibility, who in later cantos explores the meaning of his world in the light of the values represented by Homer and the great literary, cultural and moral traditions of man's history: the whole sweep of European history, especially the Renaissance and the modern periods, a vast expanse of Chinese history, the thought of the Founding Fathers and its relation to contemporary America, and other points of reference such as African and Byzantine culture. Odysseus was a bringer of order, a lover of goddesses, an embodiment of poetic vision. Pound makes wide-ranging use of these attributes. They enable him to suggest in a single figure the two sides of the secular ideal—its emphasis on human reason and its Dionysian celebration of the "life-force" and of art. Thus, in many ways throughout his poem, he advances the Confucian (and Voltairian) ideals of a rational political and economic organization of society and of an ordered inward calm in the individual. (See, for instance, the beautiful dialogue of Kung and his disciples in *Canto 13.)* At strategic intervals, also, we have glimpses of pagan beatitudes and aesthetic self-transcendence. Like Yeats and Lawrence, Pound has sought to bring to the fore again and again the sexual mysteries that are the wellsprings of religion and art. His Earthly Paradise:

The light now, not of the sun,
Chrysophrase,
And the water green clear, and blue clear. . . .
Zagreus, feeding his panthers,

M. L. ROSENTHAL's The Primer of Ezra Pound *will be published by Macmillan this spring.*

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THE CHESSMAN CASE:

A Study in Mass Deception

In the May issue of

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the turf clear as on hills under light
And under the almond trees, gods, with them, *choros nympharum.* Gods. . . .

(Canto 16)

And his major principle:

. . . . man's phallic heart is from heaven
a clear spring of rightness,
Greed turns it awry. . . .

(Canto 99)

"Greed turns it awry." This is the negative side of the Poundian vision. Sections of the *Cantos* afford us a sore and savage pleasure like that of the *Inferno* or of Blake's "London" when it cries:

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

Blake was writing about a "charter'd" world in which everything has been reduced to property rights and profits. In this usurious world sex has become a source of death instead of life, through the spread of syphilis by prostitutes. Pound's *Canto 45* is beautiful in the same way as Blake's poem is, through the terror and indignation of its revelations. As in Blake, the hatred of life-corruption is an outgrowth of the love of primal innocence:

Usura slayeth the child in the womb
It stayeth the young man's courting
It hath brought palsy to bed, lyeth
Between the young bride and her bridegroom
CONTRA NATURAM
They have brought whores for Eleusis
Corpses are set to banquet
At behest of usura.

These lines are the culmination of one of the powerful pieces of incantatory poetry in the language. Like the violently exciting "Hell-Cantos," this canto is true poetic prophecy. Not only has it the necessary moral vision, but it has discovered the emotion appropriate to it and released it in all its power. How well Pound understood and identified with Blake in this sense appears from his picture of the earlier poet running painfully on the Purgatorial Mount on a road shaped in "hard steel" that winds "like a slow screw's thread."

And the running form, naked, Blake,
Shouting, whirling his arms, the swift limbs,
Howling against the evil,
his eyes rolling,
Whirling like flaming cartwheels,
and his head held backward to gaze upon the evil
As he ran from it. . . .

In speaking of Pound's main directions in the *Cantos* I have not touched on the amazing diversity of this sequence. Its many "voices" provide a profusion of dimensions of dramatic impersonality. What Pound cannot say in his own right, Odysseus or Confucius or some troubadour or the bawdy Jim X can. The range of the poem's wit is a subject in itself. It can be Rabelaisian, it can cut with a deadly if almost invisible sharpness, it darts everywhere. Pound has always had the lightheartedness of the truly serious man, as one of his relatively early pieces may illustrate:

Upon hearing that the mother wrote verses,
And that the father wrote verses,
And that the youngest son was in a publisher's office,
And that the friend of the second daughter was undergoing a novel,
The young American pilgrim
Exclaimed:
"This is a darn'd clever bunch!"
("Moeurs Contemporains")

The same sort of thing is scattered through the *Cantos.* The solemnity of most Pound criticism pro and con has completely overlooked the importance of this element in projecting the earthy yet sophisticated consciousness at work in the *Cantos.*

ANYONE who is after a clear statement of Pound's historical and economic theories and of his special interests, particularly his study of Chinese thought and his use of "ideogrammatic" method in constructing the separate cantos, will be enlightened by Clark Emery's *Ideas Into Action.** Mr. Emery deals fairly objectively with the most sensitive issues at stake, the issues of Pound's fascism and anti-Semitism and their bearing on his poetic thought. The tragic and revolting evolution of Pound's thought grows, in my opinion, out of an excessive commitment to the tentatively valid principles summed up in his *How to Read:*

Has literature a function in the state? . . . It has. . . . It has to do with the clarity and vigour of "any and every" thought and opinion. It has to do with maintaining the very cleanliness of the tools, the health of the very matter of thought itself. . . . The individual cannot think and communicate his thought, the governor and legislator cannot act effectively or frame his laws, without words, and the solidity and validity of these words is in the care of the damned and despised *litterati.* When their work goes rotten—by that I do not mean when they express indecorous thought—but when their very medium, the very essence of their work, the application of word to thing goes rotten, i.e., becomes slushy or inexact, or excessive or bloated, the whole machinery of social and of individual thought goes to pot. This is a lesson of history. . . .

This kind of linguistic determinism makes powerful sense in its own way, and the passage itself should throw some light on the vital influence of Pound as a critic and thinker. He has the kind of drive and appeal that Lawrence does, and a certain recklessness in the way he lets fly an idea. William Van O'Connor and Edward Stone's *Casebook* is an intelligent collection of the most relevant documents in the controversy, largely journalistic, over the connection between Pound the poet and Pound the public figure. Among other items of interest, the book includes the medical report on Pound when he was committed to a mental hospital as paranoid, Robert Allen's description of him in "the cage" at the Disciplinary Training Center (prison camp) near Pisa, the main statements of the Bollingen Award controversy, and excerpts from his wartime broadcasts. Pound does not emerge morally unsullied from either Mr. Emery's book or the *Casebook.* As a shrewd friend has written me in a letter:

Pound emerges as a crank with a dominating idea. Like all cranks, he has much truth in what he says, but he rides it into the ground. And the notion that we should get rid of the Sassoons and Guggenheims so that we may pursue nymphs through the tall grass is not one to enlist my fervor. . . .

Against which we may set the large array of outstanding American writers, most of them detesters of fascism, who stood staunchly by Pound during his worst days. Not because they thought him a saint or martyr; few, indeed, have not thought his politics and racism wretched. But behind all this they saw the man

*Though published before *Thrones,* Mr. Emery's book throws light on its allusions to the monetary and historical theories of Brooks Adams, Alexander Del Mar, and the Social Credit thinkers, and to the analogous viewpoints the poet attributes in *Canto 96* to Justinian and Leo VI and in earlier and later cantos to Confucius and his followers.

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who had stood as well as any man in the century for the aesthetic ideal summed up once again in *Thrones:*

To see the light pour,
that is, toward sinceritas
of the word, comprehensive. . . .

Admittedly it's all paradoxical, infuriating, etc. But truth in these matters is at least as complicated as in, let's say, the various explosions in war and in peace of atom and nuclear bombs. Pound represents the best and the worst of our civilization and also the great, obvious question: With so much self-destructiveness, so much unresolved hostility, *can* we draw on our imaginative and constructive genius to improvise ways to freedom, joy and order against all the odds?

ART

Fairfield Porter

THE FOLLOWING four exhibitions have something in common: the Rembrandt drawings from American collections at the Morgan Library, which closed April 16; the oils, pastels, drawings and prints of Degas at Wildenstein, for the benefit of the Citizens' Committee for the Children of New York; the welded iron sculpture of Richard Stankiewicz at the Stable, and the painting constructions of Robert Rauschenberg at Castelli. For each of these artists realism transcended and transcends any systematic artistic formality.

Rembrandt created a total world of greater human depth and breadth than any other visual artist. The language of his drawings is, like Chinese, or the English of newspaper headlines, a language without grammar: the part of speech depends on the context. In a Rembrandt drawing a detail is almost meaningless by itself, and there is no form separate from the form of the whole. A line, or lines, or the wash, tells where, before it tells what: where in space, where in action and where in dramatic significance. A figure is analyzed in terms of its presence, which precedes its articulation; and the articulation may be expressed with physical vividness by the expression of a face. The turn of a neck is indicated by the eyes. A line does not mark an edge or change of plane any more often than it marks the center of weight. A line either separates what is on each side of it, or it gives integrity to where it is. Artists have had and still have certain common ways of translating external reality through appearance or tactility into flatness, but for Rembrandt essence comes first. Figures are either emphasized or made unimportant by thicker lines, as one may shout or whisper to attract attention. Wash is color, or shadow, or projection, or recession, depending on the context of the drawing as a whole. Nothing can be abstracted; the parts are meaningless, rubbishy, tattered: the ground which as a whole has its total feel all the way to the horizon, is in detail only muddy litter; the clothes of his figures as a whole may be grand or poor, but they always suggest the temperature, and in detail they are just rags. The unreal-

The Kind of Poetry I Want

Poetry like riding a squealing *oscuro*
Whose back has never held saddle before

Or a *grulla* with a coat
Like a lady's blue-grey suede glove

Or a *bayo coyote* in the red morning sun,
His coat shining like something alive.

A poetry wilder than a heifer
You have to milk into a gourd,

Charged with a power that only needs
The throwing of a switch to let loose
A devastating power.

A force reaching out as an electric current
Leaps a gap between two opposing nodes.

The poetry of one like a wild goat on a rock.
You may try to rope him on one crag.
He leaps to a still more dangerous perch,
Where, flirting with death, he waggles his beard
And fires you an ironic ba-a-a.

HUGH MACDIARMID

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ity of the detail gives connectedness to the whole, which is held together by the artist's compassion. It is interesting to observe his copies of Mantegna and of Indian miniatures, which give the human effect of these works without any attention to the artistic style.

FOR DEGAS, the tension of his paintings and pastels is in the conflict between the decorum of art and the unprecedented nature of nineteenth-century society, whose form was more and more determined by the mechanization of industry. Visual form is contrapuntal to dramatic form: what people do is one thing, and art is another. A jockey lies wounded on the ground, while the beautiful motion of the horses continues. Chance dominates decision. The humanity of his dancers has nothing to do with their skill. Degas seems to dislike life for not being art; though he had sympathy for it. The whole is greater than the part, but since Degas lacked the energy of Rembrandt's compassion, even a whole painting by Degas has something fragmentary about it. Degas could not include an attitude of the whole in one canvas. The grandeur that he could perceive lay more in art than in man; and art for Degas meant Ingres, Delacroix, Holbein and possibly the Florentine fifteenth century, even more than it meant the talent of his fellow artists, or his own. Except for the motion of horses and women, the present inspired sarcastic distaste. And Degas chose to express the disorderly present with the orderly grammar of the art of the idealists, whose remoteness from him made them idealists.

THE IDEALISTS of New York painting are the non-objective painters, who isolate art from details of actuality. They wish to see profoundly and they are against illusion. Or perhaps they simply wish to seem to see profoundly. Rauschenberg's art is disorderly in its incorporation of real elements. His red, white and black, or blue, white and black are slapped on with the skill of hand of the New York school. This is his allusion to art; he alludes to his contemporaries, as Degas' classical line and subtle values alluded to the masters of the past. Rauschenberg combines in his paintings a catalogue of real parts: radios that can be turned on simultaneously to different stations, stuffed birds, homemade ladders stained with drips of paint, chair backs, squares from cotton pants, a compass, can opener, light socket with chain, flattened and crumpled metal, photographs and pieces of newspaper, umbrellas opened flat, rough-sawn lumber and assorted hardware. His extremest construction called *Gift for Apollo*, consists of a cupboard door mounted on doll-carriage wheels, with a doorknob and glued-on necktie smeared with green; from this hangs a chain ending in a bar embedded in the hardened cement in the bottom of a battered pail.

There is a resemblance to the scavenged metal work of Stankiewicz, with the difference that Stankiewicz's material has, as it were, spoken to him before he has used it, as the piece of wood in the beginning of *Pinocchio* spoke to Master Cherry even before Master Cherry touched it with his axe. Stankiewicz responds to a preceding life of things, and Rauschenberg does not; for Rauschenberg the life of the parts depends on the final context. When a part of a Rauschenberg construction has its own life, the effect is disturbing, calling attention to a general grubbiness; I never find his stuffed birds sufficiently assimilated. In a Stankiewicz sculpture the life of a part gives character to the life of the completed sculpture. Rauschenberg's work completely counters so many preconceptions that in order to see what it is one must be open to new form beyond old formalities. He expresses a morality of poverty, inducing a monastic respect for things that no one values. He protests the waste in this society, where we take for granted that automobiles are disposable, and that our trash cans are filled with paper work. He calls attention to the success of industrialism opposite to the way the Bauhaus did, which saw industrialism as it wished to be seen. Maholy-Nagy was like an academician finding beauty in the copying of something already beautiful, with the difference that what he found already beautiful was not the Parthenon, but the skills released by modern machinery. Rauschenberg's work has more personality than anything like it. Its weakness is that it tends to approach the chic.

Rauschenberg is able to assimilate his real elements better than he usually cares to. It is as though in calling attention to the unassimilable, he disparaged art in favor of reality. Stankiewicz's fantasy about plumbing makes him sometimes illustrative, as in the two boiler-bathers playing at the beach. His more formal, abstract and untitled sculptures have greater reality; it is in these that one feels more strongly the human life than has rubbed off into his broken pieces of machinery, or the inevitably inherent life of hardware, like the resistance of things to man's purposes.

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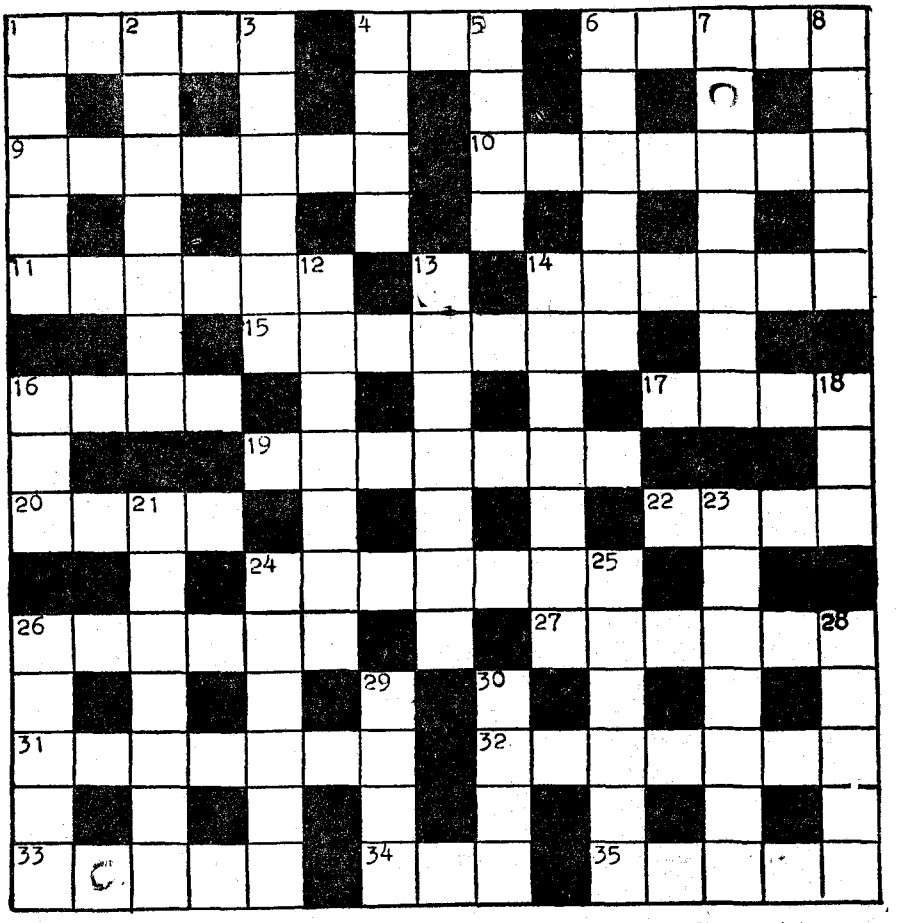
Crossword Puzzle No. 864

By FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS:

1, 4 and 6 What truth might be put down in, and led back in what condition! (5, 3, 5)
9 A B C's? No, D! It's the way 10 might go! (7)
10 Whittier's Mr. Ireson. (7)
11 Throw off the track? (6)
14 Monkey with this, and hers might look bad to you and me both! (6)
15 Masses of gases. (7)
16 It's an even bet if it goes up. (4)
17 and 22 It takes spirit to find fault with a seed container. (8)
19 One of 600, or just his horse? (7)
24 Dreiser's Financier was the first of one. (7)
31 Showed disapproval. (7)
32 Listens, for a change, to volunteers. (7)
33 He painted the old town red for environment, in a way. (5)
34 Nothing less than a great river, obviously. (3)
35 The sort of things Kreisler's mother taught. (5)

DOWN:

1, 16 down, 26 across and 27 Face up to a historian, evidently a brave person, in his study? (5, 3, 4, 2, 3, 3)
2 Certain to be found in a foolish person as one convinces us. (7)
3 Nothing with a tree comes up like clay! (6)
4 A minister in similar surroundings joins one thing to another. (4)
5 The mark of elan? (4)
6 To be uncomfortable with a formal order which he follows? (6)
7 Confession of decadence reached by the frustrated? (7)
8 Peers across the water. (5)
12 But it doesn't imply a chicken has a chitinous spur. (7)
13 The French way is broken up in a heap (which is foolish for a grown person). (7)
14 It might be a girl he found that made him take up smoking. (7)
18 and 20 Call in question the spirit touching everyone. (7)
21 Gloat over the ingot, if you prize things with it. (7)
23 To put on something extra is to get on with the writer. (7)
24 and 30 Just the 17 to fool around with a ring-maker. (10)
25 Produces what the loser does. (6)
26 With a fiery glare. (5)
28 Theirs are followed by many on simple quests. (5)
29 A study of Arabia, in small part.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 863

ACROSS: 1 and 13 Give-away program; 5 Abrade; 10 Ounce; 10 Emendates; 12 and 24 Passing the buck; 14 Cirrus; 15 and 26 Time for a change; 18 Angular; 21 Basalt; 27 Regressed; 28 Looms; 29 Lutist; 30 Armrests. DOWN: 1 Groups; 2 Vanishing; 3 Atelier; 4 Avenges; 6 Bedroom; 7 Alter; 8 Easy mark; 9 Teapot; 16 Felonious; 17 Pastoral; 19 Laurels; 20 Rakish; 21 Boarder; 22 Scholar; 23 Ceases; 25 Ergot.

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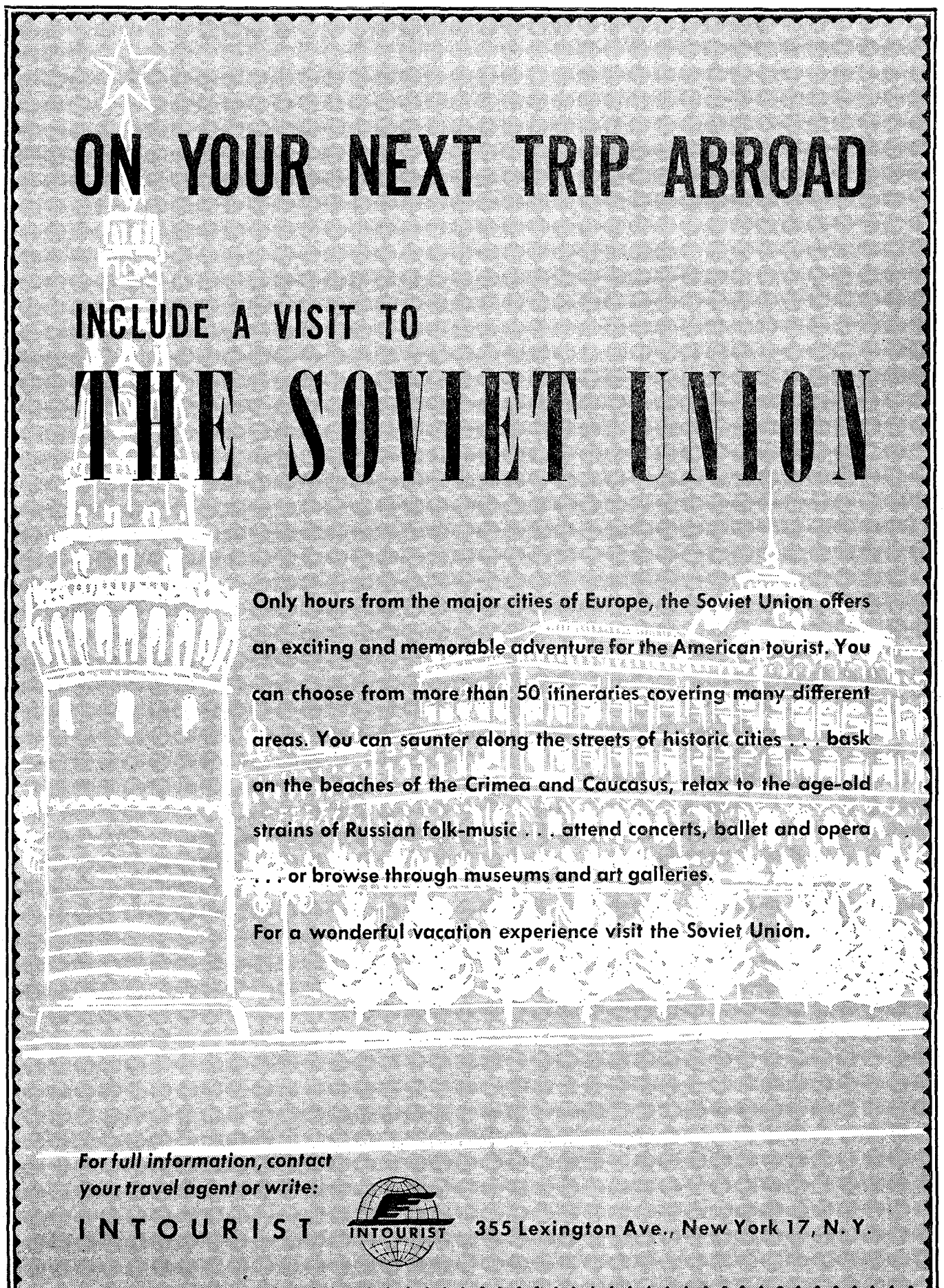
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